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ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM
ANIMALS AS LEADERS

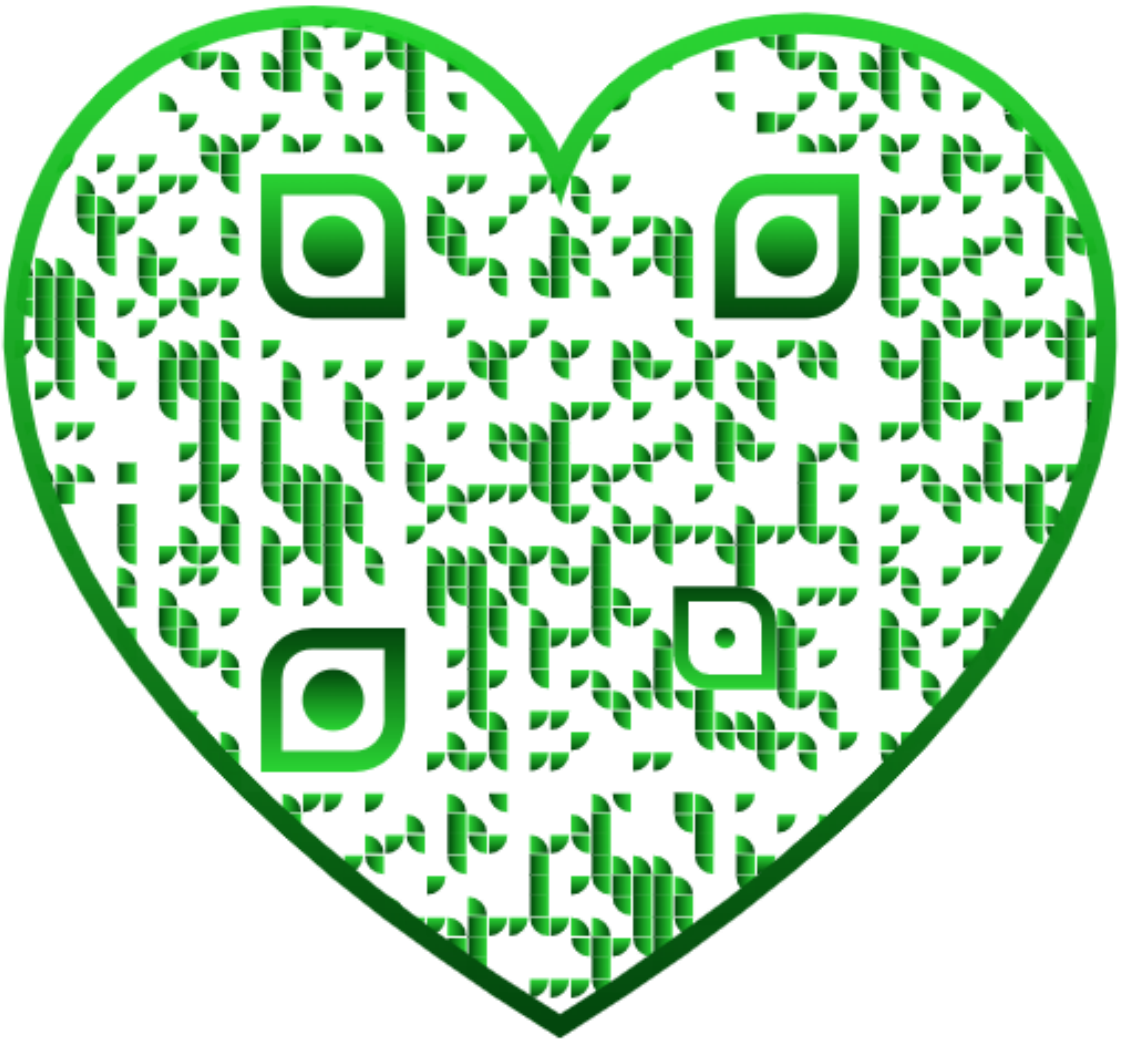
"It was magical... It just happened"

How Yes made their classic album *Close To The Edge*

IAN MCDONALD
Prog world pays tribute to King Crimson legend

TANGERINE DREAM
"Edgar's plan was that the band would live on"

WOLFGANG FLÜR
"The German press said Kraftwerk had no chance!"



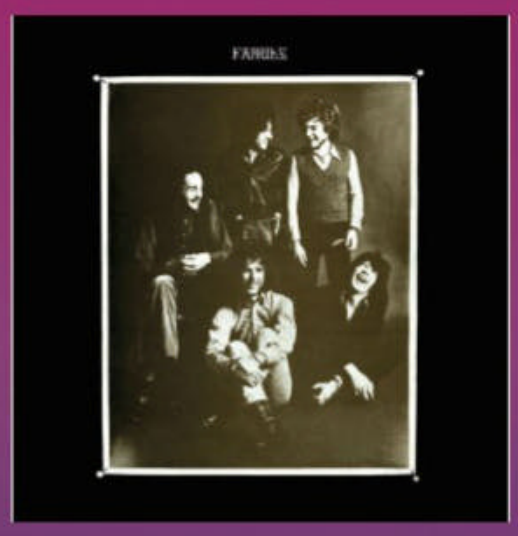
BLOSSOM TOES

'WE ARE EVER SO CLEAN'
(3CD REMASTERED & EXPANDED SET)

- Sadly overlooked at the time of its release, 'We Are Ever So Clean' is now regarded as one of the greatest psychedelic rock albums ever made.
- This expanded Esoteric Recordings edition has been newly remastered and features 27 additional bonus tracks drawn from a live performance in Stockholm in August 1967, rare singles, demos and BBC sessions. The set fully restores the original album artwork and features a booklet with an essay featuring exclusive interviews with Brian Godding and Jim Cregan.

'IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT'
(3CD EDITION)

- This expanded Esoteric Recordings edition has been newly remastered and features 20 additional bonus tracks drawn from rare demos and out-takes plus live performances in Belgium in 1969, including a live set from the Amougies Festival from October '69 where the band was joined on stage by Frank Zappa for the track 'Grooving'.
- The set fully restores the original album artwork and features a booklet with an essay featuring exclusive interviews.



FAMILY

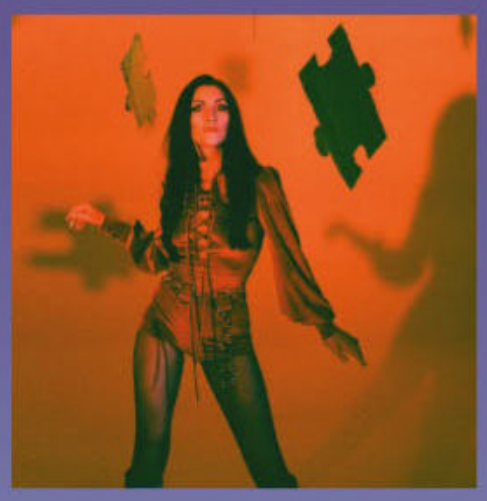
'A SONG FOR ME'
(REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION)

- This new two-disc edition of this classic album has been newly remastered from the master tapes and also includes 14 bonus tracks drawn from singles and BBC Radio sessions from August 1969 and January 1970.
- This release also features an illustrated booklet with a new essay and is a fitting tribute to a much-treasured band.

JACK LANCASTER AND ROBIN LUMLEY

'MARSCAPE'
(REMASTERED EDITION)

- A newly remastered edition of the wonderful 1976 album 'Marscape' by Jack Lancaster And Robin Lumley.
- This new edition has been remastered from newly discovered original master tapes and includes a booklet with an essay and interview with Jack Lancaster.



- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of the wonderful new studio album by Rosalie Cunningham. After her celebrated band Purson played its final gig in late 2016, singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Rosalie branched out into a successful solo career. Her self-titled debut album issued in 2019 was acclaimed by both critics and fans.

Release Date 25th February 2022

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM
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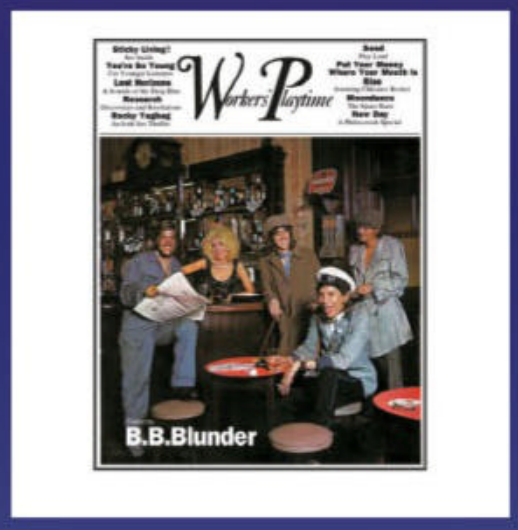
(CD EDITION)



B.B. BLUNDER

'WORKER'S PLAYTIME'
(2 CD REMASTERED EDITION)

- This Esoteric Recordings edition has been remastered and is expanded to include two previously unreleased tracks recorded for the BBC Radio 1 Sounds Of The '70s programme which featured a different band line-up with vocalist Reg King (formerly with The Action), keyboard player Nick Judd and drummer Chris Hunt.
- The set also has an additional CD of out-takes from the Olympic Studios recording sessions.

HAWKWIND

'DREAMWORKERS OF TIME – THE BBC RECORDINGS 1985-1995'
(3 CD BOXSET)

- Three CD clamshell boxed set 'Dreamworkers of Time – The BBC Recordings 1985-1995' features all of Hawkwind's live recordings and sessions made by the BBC between 1985 and 1995.
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SPIRIT

'TWELVE DREAMS OF DR SARDONICUS'
(REMASTERED & EXPANDED 2CD EDITION)

- A new expanded newly remastered 2cd edition of the classic 1970 album by Spirit. Featuring 11 bonus tracks and a additional bonus 17-track cd of previously unreleased material recorded at the Fillmore West, San Francisco in May 1970 and the Boston Tea Party in October 1970.

ISSUE 128 11.03.22

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IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE

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Yes p32

The inside story of *Close To The Edge*: a prog classic!

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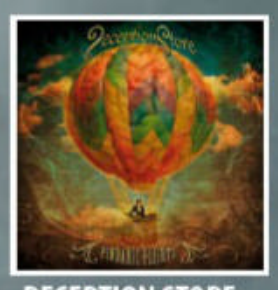

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PROG PRESENTS...

Discovering

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Karisma Records is an independent label based in Bergen, Norway. They work mainly with rock and progressive music even though their main focus is simply quality music for musically minded people. In opposition to popular trends they maintain a strong belief in the physical album complemented by digital alternatives, and their records are available worldwide in multiple formats.

Karisma Records is currently the home of Airbag, Arabs In Aspic, Bjørn Riis, Black Magic, Himmellegeme, Jordsjø, Lucy In Blue, Magic Pie, MEER, Oak, Seven Impale, Shaman Elephant, Tusmørke, Wobbler and many more, and this exclusive sampler showcases the diversity of their artists.

Karisma artists Airbag.

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What's on your free Karisma sampler digital album.
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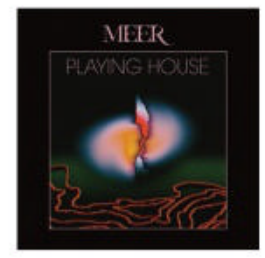
1 Bjørn Riis
Everything To Everyone
Taken from the upcoming album *Everything To Everyone*

2 Wobbler
Five Rooms
Taken from *Dwellers Of The Deep*

3 Jordsjø
Skumring I Karesuando
Taken from *Pastoralia*



4 MEER
Songs Of Us
Taken from *Playing House*

5 Kosmodome
Hypersonic
Taken from *Kosmodome*

6 Tusmørke
Ride The Whimbrel
Taken from *Nordisk Krim*

7 Himmellegeme
Let The Mother Burn
Taken from *Variola Vera*

8 Lucy In Blue
Respire
Taken from *Lucy In Blue*

9 Airbag
Machines And Men
Taken from *A Day At The Beach*

10 Arabs In Aspic
I Vow To Thee, My Screen
Taken from *Madness And Magic*

11 Monstereo
Jigsaw
Taken from *In The Hollow Of A Wave*

12 Shaman Elephant
Magnets
Taken from *Wide Awake But Still Asleep*

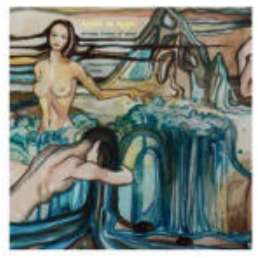
13 Seven Impale
Serpentstone
Taken from *Contrapasso*

14 Oak
We, The Drowned
Taken from *False Memory Archive*

15 Magic Pie
The Man Who Had It All
Taken from *Fragments Of The Fifth Element*

16 Wobbler
Lá Bealtine
Taken from *Rites At Dawn*

17 Caravela Escarlate
Caravela Escarlate
Taken from *Caravela Escarlate*



18 Arabs In Aspic
Mørket
Taken from *Strange Frame Of Mind*

19 Airbag
Colours
Taken from *Identity*

20 Plenty
Strange Gods
Taken from *It Could Be Home*

Ed's Letter

Spotify

Stream the Prog 128 playlist at www.spoti.fi/3pe4y8l

Hello, and welcome to the new issue of *Prog* magazine. As I write this column, news has just broken that Procol Harum singer Gary Brooker has passed away. I'm currently listening to the epic *In Held 'Twas In I* from 1968's *Shine On Brightly*. Gary is another great loss to the music world, as was King Crimson's Ian McDonald, who we pay tribute to in this issue. We seem to be in a cycle of unending bad news lately. I really do hope it comes to a close very soon. We'll pay full tribute to Gary in the next issue.

Hopefully this issue of *Prog* will bring some light into your life, especially as we focus on one of the all-time great progressive albums, *Close To The Edge* by Yes. Reading Sid Smith's excellent story (from page 32), you get the feeling that the band were in almost perfect harmony while recording the album and it represents a unique period in the ever-changing timeline of Yes.

I'm also delighted to be able to bring you an update on our new focus on grass roots progressive music. Thank you to everyone who has written to me about the demise of the physical CD. I've tried to reply personally to everyone and I do hope you're enjoying the new digital samplers. This issue it's Norwegian label Karisma, with a host of excellent music (see page 7).

For up-and-coming progressive artists, we'll be starting a Tracks Of The Week feature online. These will to go to a public vote each week, and the band accruing the most votes over the month will be rewarded with a Limelight feature in the magazine. The onus will very much be on newer bands, so hopefully it will provide a spotlight to shine on burgeoning prog talent and I hope you'll all get involved in voting. Keep your eyes peeled for an announcement on the magazine website and our social channels.

And a reminder that you can check out most bands in the issue through our Spotify playlist, which you can find on the top left of this page. Enjoy this issue, stay safe and prog on...

Jerry Ewing – Editor

NEXT ISSUE APR 22 ON SALE

You can subscribe to *Prog* at www.magazinesdirect.com. See page 112 for further details.

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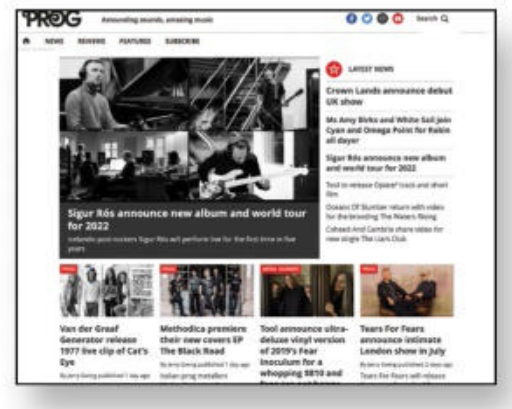

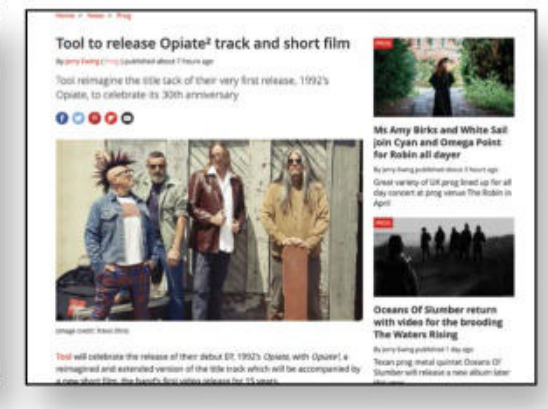

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SHINING EXAMPLE

I have just renewed my subscription to *Prog* and found the CD had been discontinued. Not happy at first but after downloading the MoonJune sampler in *Prog* 126, which is wonderful, I had a change of heart. I found this was a much better way of listening to a sampler album than by CD as I could get to the information on my device without having to keep getting up to check the player and the CD cover information. It will probably prompt me to buy more CDs from it. It's a good way ahead hopefully.

Trevor Hall, via email

LIVING IN THE NOW

Well, it's not a bad time to be a Jethro Tull fan! First up the *Benefit* reissue complete with not one but two live concerts and a host of remixes, essays and interviews – not forgetting, of course, the wonderful remixed album which set the standard for how to blend the electric with the acoustic (even if Ian Anderson is somewhat lukewarm towards it!).

Secondly, the lockdown project, *Silent Singing,* containing the lyrics of every Tull and IA song – nearly 350 in total and demonstrating unsurpassed lyrical content and musical consistency over half a century. I can think of very few who come even close to this remarkable achievement. Having it all in one place in *Silent Singing* serves to emphasise just what an amazing body of work it is.

Thirdly, the *Prog* special presented in the inimitable *Prog* mag style and flying the flag for a prog institution still going strong after 54 years in the face of some seriously good younger competition!

And, of course, last but certainly not least, the new album *The Zealot Gene*. Leaving aside the distracting arguments regarding whether or not this is really an Ian Anderson solo album and the ongoing absence of Martin Barre, this is a stunningly good collection of songs. Musically the third in the trilogy started by *Thick As A Brick 2* and then *Homo Erraticus* – both Anderson solo albums but don't let that complicate things – this "mother of all concept albums" proves beyond doubt that Anderson thoroughly deserved his Prog God Award and is one of the few artists to merit the term "genius".

I'm already looking forward to the next album – but how on earth do you follow a concept as daunting as the Good Book?

Graham Smith, London

Despite appearances, Ian Anderson is enjoying a purple patch.

IAN ANDERSON

ASKING FOR 'ELP!

I would just like to say how much I enjoyed the ELP articles in *Prog* 125. As a teenager when ELP were at their best ('70-'74), they were the best prog band to my ears! And I remember sneaking their albums onto my parents' stereo when they were out (as I only had a mono record player). Happy days all round, rose-tinted glasses.

I've tried to order the new ELP book, but was told that it's only available in German print. Perhaps they will publish an English version at some point in the future?

Stephen Chapman, Westgate-On-Sea

Thanks for your letter, Stephen. We're delighted that you enjoyed our ELP articles. The English-language edition of Emerson, Lake & Palmer*, published by Rocket 88, can be purchased directly from the website www.elpbook.com. At time of press, both the classic and signature editions were in stock. – Deputy Ed.*

THE CURTAIN CALL

The state of progressive music is in rude health. The doors to the kingdom have been thrown open as wide as Elbow's curtains as the community recognises and embraces the breadth of the genre, acknowledging those who are creating inventive music that can class as this thing we call 'prog'. We now get Mogwai, Gojira and The Anchoress mentioned in the same breath as Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Caravan as the conveyor belt of exciting new bands that broaden the church of progressive music ensures that the future is bright.

While many are making tentative steps into our world, natural selection almost dictates how there are those whose life

TWEET TALK

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NICK BEGGS
@NickBeggs
It's 1,000 years ago this week since Kajagoogoo were No.1 and PEOPLE still think it's funny when they tell me not to be *Too Shy*

NAD SYLVAN

NAD SYLVAN
@SylvanOfficial
Five years ago. I do like this outfit. It's the regal bastard look

LETTER

I have just finished reading Mario Giammetti's book, *Genesis: 1975 To 2021 — The Phil Collins Years* with great interest. Being a longtime fan of the band, I found it very informative, and I enjoyed reading all the interviews, and quotes from the bandmembers.

The chapter on *Calling All Stations* was of particular interest, as I very much enjoyed that album and tour with Ray Wilson on vocals. It has some great tracks on the album, namely the title track, *The Dividing Line* and *There Must Be Some Other Way*. Although sadly I thought *Congo* and *Shipwrecked* were quite weak and not interesting artistically.

It was a great shame that Banks and Rutherford did not decide to do another album with Ray Wilson, as the music was more progressive on *Calling All Stations* and very similar to older Genesis style. I actually felt quite sorry for Ray Wilson as he did a great job, a voice similar to Gabriel and Collins and was keen to take it further. Yes, the tour wasn't as popular as in the past but I think they should have gone for smaller venues and sold those out rather than going for the vast arenas. I personally prefer the smaller venues, and it has been so good seeing Steve Hackett really keeping the earlier material flame and flag still very much alight and flying. Another fantastic UK tour last year, and another one later this year.

I do have tickets to see Genesis at the O2 in March (touch wood all will be fine this time), which I am very much looking forward to, and I hope they will continue on for sometime yet even if Phil Collins really feels this is it and time to put it to bed! I hope not.

Christopher Millns, Sedlescombe, East Sussex

This issue's star letter wins a goodie bag from The Merch Desk at www.themerchdesk.com.

is coming to an end. Having seen many of the iconic flag bearers reach their final days, it begs the question: How long can you go on and when the time arrives, how do you 'retire'?

Many of those flag bearers are still plying their trade in some guise: Yes, Caravan and Van der Graaf Generator are three examples of bands who are still going. Maybe watered down — a couple (or less) of original members and friends to maintain the legacy — and sometimes even making new music, which is often pilloried for not matching the standards set in previous incarnations. However for a band such as Gong, who have no original members, there's a strong case for the current line-up doing a sterling job in maintaining the legacy with the sort of gusto that Daevid Allen would be proud to see.

Many offer the 'final tour' incentive, where long-term fans decline the option to buy a £200 ticket, exercising their preference to remember the band in their prime. Tours where the box tickers outnumber the real fans. Flagging up the recent Genesis tour as one which has been tinged with sadness as many have commented on the fragility of Phil Collins with his health issues. On the other hand, King Crimson have never sounded better than the multi-headed beast that has provided some astounding and astonishing musical moments over the past five or six years.

***Prog* 125, rose-tinted glasses not included!**

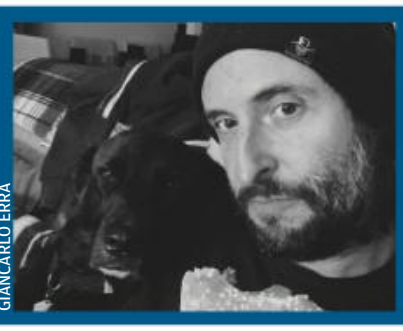
Marillion are enjoying an Indian Summer, Hackett is doing more and more revisits of the classic Genesis days while his solo work goes on the backburner (on stage at least) and we're loving it.

In *Prog* 126, we had Ian Anderson name-checking Meat Loaf (RIP) and the decision to stop touring while admitting to his own uncertainty of being able to call it a day. Steve Hackett has said similar about his own retirement. Fish keeps 'trying' to retire from live performance, various obstacles preventing his plans from running smoothly. We may have seen his last show — but who knows?

One band who did it with — and here's the key word — dignity is Rush. Play *The Garden*, the last song on their last album. They knew. Neil knew. And watch the final moments of the final gig on the *Time Stands Still* film. Poignant yet so celebratory — Neil finally at the front of the stage and happy that he and his band have reached a finale and left a legacy of which they can justifiably be proud.

Mike Ainscoe, via email

PETE FOWLER
@petefowlerart
Anyway, back to listening to Eno's *Music For Airports' Man Getting Face Massage*


GIANCARLO ERRA

GIANCARLO ERRA
@giancarloerra
Juno trying her hardest to be cute and persuade me to share...

ROBIN ARMSTRONG
@cosmograf
This might be a good time to admit I've never listened to a @MarillionOnline album in its entirety, but I bloody love the new single *Murder Machines*.

PROG

Future PLC, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 6JR
Email prog@futurenet.com
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Contributors
Jeremy Allen (JA), Joe Banks (JB), Mike Barnes (MB), Jordan Blum (JMB), Chris Cope (CC), Stephen Dalton (SD), Isere Lloyd-Davis (ILD), Daryl Easlea (DE), Dave Everley (DEV), Ian Fortnam (IF), Polly Glass (PG), Eleanor Goodman (EG), Nick Holmes [NH], Rob Hughes (RH), Will Ireland (WI), Emma Johnston (EJ), Jo Kendall (JK), Hannah May Kilroy (HMK), Dom Lawson (DL), Fraser Lewry (FL), Dannii Leivers (DLE), Dave Ling (DML), Alex Lynham (AL), Gary Mackenzie (GMM), Emily MacNevin (EM), Rhodri Marsden (RHM), Julian Marszalek (JM), Giulia Mascheroni (GMA), Chris McGarel (CMG), Grant Moon (GRM), Kris Needs (KN), Kevin Nixon (KNI), Alison Reijman (AR), Chris Roberts (CR), Paul Sexton (PS), Johnny Sharp (JS), Nick Shilton (NS), Sid Smith (SS), Francesca Tyer (FT), Rick Wakeman (RW), Phil Weller (POW), David West (DW), Philip Wilding (PW), Rich Wilson (RW), Holly Wright (HW)

Cover image
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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Manager **Helen Hughes**
helen.hughes@futurenet.com
Account Director **Steven Pyatt**
steve.pyatt@futurenet.com
Account Manager **Ayomide Magbagbeola**
ayomide.magbagbeola@futurenet.com

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd
Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

ISSN 2045-2260

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INTRO

IF IT'S OUT THERE, IT'S IN HERE

RUSH'S *MOVING PICTURES* REISSUED

The Canadian stars' classic 1981 album gets the lavish box set treatment, with previously unreleased live footage and high-quality vinyl among the treats for fans.

A deluxe reissue of Rush's classic 1981 album *Moving Pictures* will be available from April 15.

As part of UMe/Mercury and Anthem Records' Rush 40th anniversary series, the band's biggest selling album will be released in a dizzying number of formats and editions including CD, deluxe vinyl, Dolby Atmos versions and audio Blu-ray. Bonus items include a full, previously unreleased concert mixed by longtime collaborator Terry Brown, plus extensive, newly produced booklets, replica programmes, posters and tickets, and more.

Moving Pictures was born from musical ideas first bounced around by Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart during their lengthy *Permanent Waves* tour over the first six months of 1980. Excited by the strong new material emerging, they deferred a projected live album and opted instead to completely re-draw their plans for the following couple of years, and record a brand new release.

Following writing and demo sessions, the trio returned to Le Studio in Morin-Heights, Quebec, where they had recorded *Permanent Waves*. Working again with producer Terry Brown they put down *Moving Pictures'* seven tracks over October and November 1980.

Continuing with an approach they started on that previous album, Rush deliberately set out to create more direct, focused and structured material. From the implacable purpose of *Tom Sawyer* to the angular, reggae-tinged *Vital Signs* and signature instrumental *tour-de-force YYZ*, *Moving Pictures* delivered in ways that kept established fans satisfied yet also managed to pull in a huge new audience. It was the album that truly catapulted the trio into rock's premier division, selling over five and a half million copies, hitting No.1 in their native Canada and peaking at No.3 in the UK and US, where it is currently certified five times platinum.

This 40th anniversary release comes in six different versions, the most extravagant being the super deluxe edition. This is presented in a lift-top box with new artwork from original album designer Hugh Syme, and includes a 44-page hardcover book also with new artwork, unreleased photos and extensive liner notes, with contributions from the band's high-profile admirers including Les Claypool (Primus) and Taylor Hawkins (Foo Fighters).

The three CDs included encompass the Abbey Road 2015 remastered edition of the album (which is available on CD for the first

"The album that catapulted the band into rock's premier division..."

time), along with two discs of previously unreleased bonus live content. Mixed from Terry Brown's analogue multitracks, this includes *Live In YYZ 1981* — the band's complete concert from Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, Ontario in March of that titular year.

The fourth bonus disc is a Blu-ray with the album newly mixed from the original multi-tracks in Dolby Atmos, Dolby TrueHD 5.1, and DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 surround sound from producer/engineer Richard Chycki, alongside the previously available PCM Stereo mix. The five, 180 gram vinyl LPs have been cut via half-speed direct to metal mastering.

Other items in the exhaustive super deluxe box include a red Barchetta model car, a pair of Neil Peart signature MP40 branded drumsticks, Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson metal-embossed guitar picks, a replica *Moving Pictures* 1981 official tour program, an MP40 logo enamel pin; a 3D lenticular '*Moving Pictures* In Motion' lithograph; an 18 by 24-inch Toronto 1981 concert poster; a replica concert ticket from that 1981 Maple Leaf Gardens show; a Rush Through The Years 1973-1981 poster; a YYZ luggage tag; and an All Access World Tour '81 insert.

The remaining configurations of the reissue are a three-CD deluxe edition, a five-LP deluxe edition, a single LP edition, a digital deluxe edition, and a Dolby Atmos digital edition.

For more information on the various sets visit www.bit.ly/movpic40, and we will be taking an in-depth look at this extraordinary album in the next issue of *Prog*. **GMM**

Rush: *Moving Pictures* is getting the deluxe treatment it deserves. (The hair, less so...)

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

This month, Intro was compiled by

Chris Cope
Claudia Elliott
Dave Everley
Jerry Ewing
Gary Mackenzie
Rhodri Marsden
Grant Moon
Natasha Scharf
Phil Weller
Rich Wilson

SEL BALAMIR FINDS HOME FOR *ORPHANS*

The "genre-fluid" prog star on his second solo album, and the return of Amplifier.

Sel Balamir – he's a *Swell* guy!

PRESS/AOK

Amplifier man Sel Balamir returns with his second solo album on March 11. *Orphans* (styled *()rphans* on the cover) is released through Balamir's Rockosmos label, and is the follow-up to his well-received 2021 solo debut, *Swell*.

"I had zero expectations for *Swell*," Balamir tells *Prog*. "I made it more for therapy really, so I was super chuffed with the reception. And in a way *Orphans* is just an extension of that. It was just music I made in that one period – all these musical 'orphans' didn't really fit *Swell*, and didn't fit Amplifier either, so that's where the album title came from."

Made by Balamir at his studio near his home in Worthing, the six-track album includes the title tune, plus *Astral Womb*, *Pink Bows*, *Mannequin* and *Don't Wear The Crown*. *Theme (From Crocodile Dundee)*, is an off-the-wall reworking of the music from that 1986 blockbuster starring Paul Hogan, which was the first movie Balamir saw at the cinema.

"I'm difficult to pigeonhole stylistically," he says. "I'm genre-fluid! One of the great things about streaming and digital music is that it gives you infinite ways to catalogue what you do. Every album you make could be as a different act. You can explore different personas."

While he plans to deepen his solo catalogue over the coming years, Balamir has also confirmed that Amplifier are out of their hiatus and currently working on new material, with a release currently planned for May.

All the latest information is at www.rockosmos.com. **GRM**

PROCOL HARUM FRONTMAN GARY BROOKER DEAD AT 76

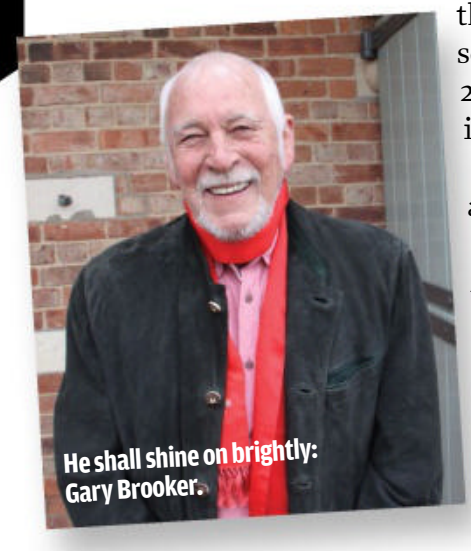
The star passed away peacefully at home on February 19.

Just as *Prog* was going to press we received the very sad news that Procol Harum's vocalist and pianist Gary Brooker had died. According to the band's website, Brooker had cancer, and passed away peacefully at home on February 19. He was 76.

Born in east London on May 29, 1945, Brooker founded Procol Harum in 1966 with guitarist Robin Trower and lyricist Keith Reid. Released the following year, their timeless debut single *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* secured the band's legacy in popular culture — in 2009 BBC Radio 2 named it the most played song in public places over the previous 75 years.

With Brooker at the helm, Procol Harum were a major voice in the progressive boom that began in the late 60s, releasing albums such as *Shine On Brightly* (1968) and *A Salty Dog* (1969). Brooker also went on to have a fruitful solo career.

Keep an eye out for a full tribute to this remarkable artist in our next issue. **GRM**



He shall shine on brightly: Gary Brooker.

PRESS/ALEX ASPREY

JON ANDERSON ON PATREON AND MORE

The Yes legend offers up fan exclusives, autobiography, shows and a sequel to *Olias*.

Content provider: Jon Anderson.

PRESS/DEBORAH ANDERSON

Jon Anderson has launched a Patreon page and is promising to dig deep into his "massive" archive of unreleased solo songs for fans who subscribe to it.

"A friend told me about Patreon as a way to connect with people directly on different levels," the former Yes singer tells *Prog*. "Record companies think I'm an old fart who isn't going to sell many records, but I have so much music from the past 20 or 30 years sitting around, I thought, 'What a great way to let people hear it, and read stories I've written.'"

Anderson's Patreon features three different 'Membership Levels' ranging in price from £8 to £77 per month, which allow followers access to everything from exclusive behind-the-scenes footage to access to Anderson's archive, and in-person online Q&As.

He's already unveiled several unheard songs, including *To Be Alive*, *Beautiful Image Of Peacefulness* and *Real Life*. There's also what he calls the 'Opus Puzzle' — a sonic jigsaw made up of more than 20 short pieces of music, which fans can edit together to win a "present" from him. The singer plans to publish his autobiography, *Survival And Other Stories*, chapter by chapter via the platform too: "It's my life from being a kid, joining a band with my brother, and so on."

Sadly, Anderson's Patreon page won't feature any unreleased material written with Yes, Vangelis or as part of the curtailed ARW project he founded with Rick Wakeman and Trevor Rabin. However, he is close to finishing *Zamran: Son Of Olias*, the long-gestating follow-up to his 1976 debut solo album *Olias Of Sunhillow*. "It will be in four movements, lasting over four hours," he says. "The first and second movements are finished — they're 55 minutes and an hour. I was working on the third movement just yesterday, and that's over an hour. Now I've just got to work out the story interwoven between the layers."

In April, Anderson will team up with students from American music school The Paul Green Rock Academy for a short US tour revisiting Yes classics. He is also plotting a 2023 tour backed by The Band Geeks, the quarantine covers group put together by Blue Öyster Cult guitarist Richie Castellano.

"We'd do *Close To The Edge*, *Gates Of Delirium*, *Awaken*, and then a bunch of classic songs," says Anderson. "We'd make it sound as much like Yes in the 70s as possible." **DEV**

> **"I've got so much music just sitting around, what a great way for people hear it."**

See www.patreon.com/jonanderson for more information about his fan offers.

INTRO extras

PROG STARS JOIN RADAR FESTIVAL

There's a strong prog presence at the second incarnation of Radar Festival. Leprous and Haken are set to headline two nights of the event, which takes place at the Casino Nightclub in Guildford from July 29–31. Intervals and Plini also feature on a strong, varied bill of modern, metal-orientated acts. The inaugural Radar Festival took place in 2019, but has been postponed for the past two years due to the pandemic. For the full bill, ticketing and other information go to www.radarfestival.co.uk

Man for all seasons: TMT's Peter Jones.

PRESS/ROB REED

TIGER MOTH TALES BRING THE *SPRING*

Camel's Andy Latimer is among the guest players on new album, *A Song Of Spring*.

Peter Jones' Tiger Moth Tales return to the progressive fold on the new album, *A Song Of Spring*. Just released on White Knight Records, the collection follows on from 2017's *The Depths Of Winter* in the band's exploration of the seasons. It is billed as a record that regales the listener with tales of life, rebirth and renewal, with stories "from Pagan rites to Roman and Greek goddesses" and beyond.

"The last few albums went into different territories," Jones tells *Prog*, "so I felt it was time to get back into the prog arena and return to the true Tiger Moth Tales ethos. You have some very joyful tracks and then you've got my take on Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* – which was quite a dark tangent to go down – as well as more poignant moments like *Light*, which is about waiting for the end of winter and for spring to begin."

That song features a notable contribution from Jones' Camel bandmate, Andy Latimer. "Andy came up with an amazing solo," Jones says, "which takes the track to a new level. It sounds like the sun coming up. He's wanted to do a solo on a track for a while, I'm glad we could make it happen. It's been the icing on the cake."

The album also features contributions from longtime collaborators John and Elizabeth Holden, who contribute to what Jones describes as the record's 'varied' feel. "I really enjoy it when there are shifts of tone," he says. "I always like to have that spectrum of emotions."

For more information go to www.bit.ly/tigermothtales. **POW**

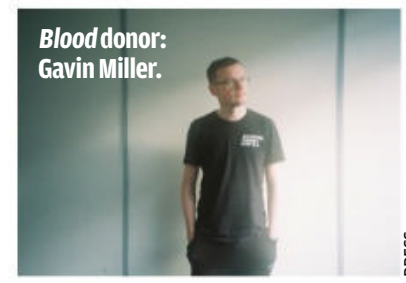
WORRIEDABOUTSATAN TO INDULGE IN *BLOODSPORT*

Gavin Miller on the 'gnarled, aggressive' energy of album nine.

Innovative electronica artist Gavin Miller releases the ninth album from Worriedaboutsatan on March 25. Available via the This Is It Forever label, *Bloodsport* was recorded at Miller's home studio in Bradford, and he says that the record's "gnarled, aggressive energy" marks it as a departure from Worriedaboutsatan's previous more layered ambient approach.

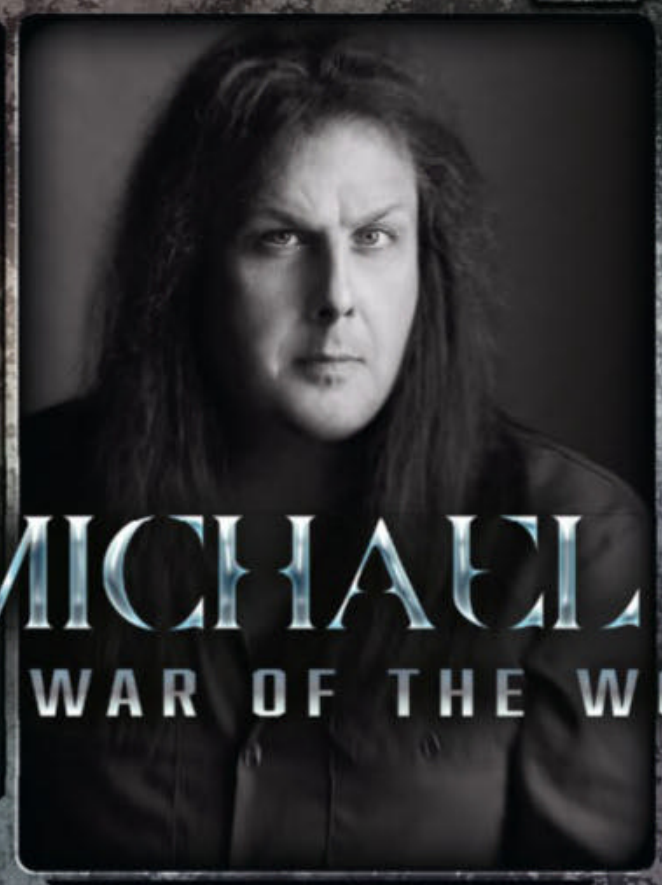
"You can't live and make music in a bubble," he says, "and the way things are at the moment made it particularly difficult to give it a happy soundtrack. There's a bit of light on the album too, it's not all doom and gloom. I haven't made a harsh noise album or anything. Yet."

Track titles such as *Sigourney Weaver Fanclub President*, *Apex Redditor* and *An Absolute Living Hell, Pt 1* give a taste of what's in store. In March, Miller will play live shows in Shipley, Leeds, Glasgow and London. For tickets go to www.bit.ly/satandates, and read more about Worriedaboutsatan on Miller's regularly updated blog: www.bit.ly/satanblog. **GRM**



Blood donor: Gavin Miller.

PRESS



MICHAEL ROMEO

WAR OF THE WORLDS // PT.2

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The Flower Kings

BY ROYAL DECREE

In Stores 4th March 2022

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Pattern-Seeking Animals

Only Passing Through

In Stores 1st April 2022

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A diverse world of outstanding & unique prog rock compositions!

Available as Ltd CD Digipak, Gatefold 180g 2LP + CD (with etching on Side D) & as Digital Album. Includes 2 bonus tracks.

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INSIDE OUT MUSIC

MS AMY BIRKS BACK WITH ALBUM TWO

In Our Souls features the Brontës' poetry set to music, with John Hackett among guests.

***Soul* Survivor: Ms Amy Birks.**

PRESS/RICHARD SHAKESPEAR

Ms Amy Birks releases her second solo album on April 8. *In Our Souls* is the follow-up to her acclaimed 2020 debut *All That I Am & All That I Was*, with three of its 12 songs featuring poems setting music to words by the Brontë sisters.

"I did English Literature at college," Birks tells *Prog*, "and I've always had a fascination with the Brontës. I thought, 'Well, Kate Bush has done *Wuthering Heights* so I'm not going to touch the novels, but what about the poetry?' So I went through them and landed on three that I loved, one from each sister."

With a performance video featuring talented young dancer Courtney Cork, the album's title track and lead single draws on Charlotte Brontë's poem *In Our Souls*. *A Death Scene* was inspired by a work by Emily Brontë, while *The Dream* comes from Anne Brontë.

"Anne was into vocal music," Birks explains, "so I kept *The Dream* more like a singer-songwriter piece. Emily was quite passionate and dark, she was into Beethoven and Liszt, so I pushed the piano to the forefront on that. I found their words went very well with the sort of melodies I write."

Drawing on the classical and chamber pop flavours of her previous album and her work with former band Beatrix Players, the record also notably includes *Brothers*, in which she explores her troubled relationship with her own siblings. *The Woman In White* was partly inspired by the Wilkie Collins novel, but also reflects on her difficult first marriage.

Birks remarried last year and relocated with her husband from London to a village just outside Stoke-On-Trent. She recorded most of the music at her home studio, with contributions from, among others, regular guitarists Tom Manning and Oliver Day, cellist Clare O'Connell, bassist Kyle Welch and drummer Andrew Booker. Steve Hackett guested on her debut, and her second album features flute from John Hackett. "John's such a sweetheart," she says. "Once he told me, 'Amy I'd walk in high heels to play for you!' He likes my writing and I love his playing."

In Our Souls is out on digital platforms from April 8, with the vinyl and CD release to follow on June 17. The day after, Birks will perform a full-band launch show at Stoke's Jubilee Hall, and she has more live dates planned over the coming year. **GRM**

"The Brontës' words go very well with the sort of melodies I write."

For more on In Our Souls and the latest tour dates, see www.msamybirks.com.

INTRO extras

BROCK IN A BOX!

Hawkwind leader Dave Brock has curated *This Was Your Future: Space Rock (And Other Psychedelics) 1978–1998*. Released by Cherry Red on April 22, this three-CD, 40-track box set explores the space rock and free festival scene, and features music from Hawkwind ('and their many offshoots'), plus artists such as Ozric Tentacles, Here And Now, Magic Mushroom Band, Robert Calvert and Agents Of Chaos. Sleevenotes come from noted Hawkwind biographer Ian Abrahams. More details at www.bit.ly/brockbox.

Things are looking up: Pure Reason Revolution.

PRESS/GREG JONG

NEW PURE REASON REVOLUTION MUSIC

The British art rockers return with "optimistic" album, *Above Cirrus,* in May.

UK art rockers Pure Reason Revolution are set to return on May 6 with new album *Above Cirrus*, on InsideOut.

"There are extremes of heaviness on the record," says singer/guitarist Jon Courtney of the follow-up to 2020's *Eupnea*. "Points of it are heavier than ever before, but it also has more electronics, though it's by no means an electronic record."

The album title came from a conversation Courtney had with guitarist Greg Jong outside the studio in the New Forest, where they were working on the album. As the pair looked at the sky, Jong began to reel off the different cloud formations: cumulus, stratus and, at the top, cirrus.

"I said, 'What's above cirrus?'" Courtney recalls, "and Greg said, 'Nothing's above cirrus.' It opened these existential questions: what's above there? Where am I? What's my purpose? We've never asked ourselves this more often than over the last two years."

The pandemic inspired the album's first single, *A New Kind Of Evil*. "It was the first track I worked on for the record, and it reflected the arrival of Covid: 'What's this new kind of evil we have here?' It ties in with the primitive, surreal weirdness of the times."

Despite the turbulence of recent times, Courtney remains optimistic for the future. "With the lockdowns, our worlds shrink down because we have less contact and there was a lot of intensity on relationships. But the end message is optimistic, that we'll get through this and be stronger together."

For updates go to www.purereasonrevolutionofficial.com. **DEV**

PATTERN-SEEKING ANIMALS ARE *PASSING THROUGH* AGAIN

The US group promise "stylistic detours" on album three.

Pattern-Seeking Animals release their third studio album, *Only Passing Through*, on April 1 via InsideOut.

The US band features Spock's Beard trio Ted Leonard (guitars, vocals), Jimmy Keegan (drums) and Dave Meros (bass), and is the brainchild of composer and keyboardist John Boegehold. He says that the new album picks up where their second, *Prehensile Tales*, left off: "But it soon takes several stylistic detours as it progresses. Everyone involved made this album a lot of fun to make and we're all looking forward to it finally being heard."

According to Boegehold, lead single *I Can't Stay Here Anymore* is "based on a fictional character who finds the place he's lived his whole life has turned dangerous and dystopian. Or, maybe it's not…"

The band are on the bill at this April's RoSFest and are on board for Cruise To The Edge in May. For information and album pre-orders visit their website, www.psanimals1.com. **POW**

***Passing* interest: Pattern-Seeking Animals.**

PRESS

FAD GADGETS

Rhodri Marsden on three of the latest must-have gizmos currently putting the prog in progress.

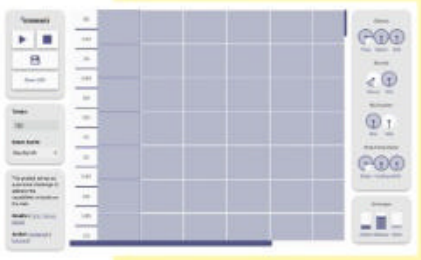
MARINE PLASTIC GUITAR

Human beings currently dump an estimated eight million tonnes of plastic into the ocean each year, and various efforts are underway around the world to reclaim that waste and put it to good use. Designer Burls Art, who's made guitars out of such unlikely substances as coffee beans, pencils and rock salt, has teamed up with a Florida-based waste reclaiming organisation to transform plastic waste from the Atlantic Ocean into a functioning (and beautiful) instrument. This doesn't make much of a dent in the waste problem, but is still a symbol of what can be achieved. **www.burlsart.com/4ocean**

CASIOTONE CT-S1000V

Ever since 1947's *Sparky's Magic Piano*, there's been a fascination in the collision between electronics and the human voice. Talk boxes, vocoders, harmonizers and voice synthesis have all played their part in creating music that sounds "a bit like a robot". Casio, however, has gone one further, with this keyboard, which sings phrases prompted by text alone. Yep, you type in the lyrics, it does the rest. '*Can you hear my voice?*' sings the keyboard in the demo video. '*You won't believe it, can you conceive it?*' Yes, I can, and it sounds a bit like a robot. **www.bit.ly/casio1000v**

ASTEROID SYNTH



Modern synths offer such a wealth of options that it's tempting to just hit the 'randomise' button and hope a palatable sound emerges. This approach often works, but it does lack conceptual rigour. But this web-based synth uses parameters drawn from data on asteroids NASA is currently monitoring, with waveforms based on an asteroid's size, speed and the potential danger to life on Earth. Suddenly, your magnum opus has strong scientific credentials. You may proceed. **www.asteroidblock.io**

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

Blue-sky thinking: Sydney's The Lazy Eyes.

PRESS/JACK MORAN

THE LAZY EYES

Meet the Australian psych-rockers who honed their colourful craft by busking around Sydney, and later started their own festival.

Three members of psych-rockers The Lazy Eyes met at a performing arts high school in Sydney. As the only rock kids there, they bonded instantly. "Everyone else was playing cello and violin," recalls guitarist/vocalist Itay Shachar, "so we were instantly drawn to each other."

Shachar, drummer Noah Martin and keysman/guitarist Harvey Geraghty shared a love for the Australian psychedelic scene spearheaded by Tame Impala and King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard. Bassist Leon Karagic joined after the band had honed their craft while busking around Sydney's sun-baked streets.

"It was the ideal start," Shachar believes. "It taught us we had to always put on a show to engage people who were just out to buy sneakers or whatever. We went above and beyond to make people think, 'What the hell's going on?!'"

After Karagic's arrival, they began writing original music, and soon began to establish themselves on the local scene. "There are a lot of bands in Sydney," Karagic says, "but it's hard to pinpoint any sort of scenes. It's a hodgepodge of different suburbs, sounds and cliques."

The Lazy Eyes' kaleidoscopic sound spread through gigs and two EPs, and now debut album *Songbook* shows the world what they can do.

"We want to appeal to wider audiences," says Karagic. "We approach music with the intricate structures and ideas of progressive pop, and blend in more experimentation and weirdness."

Having struggled to get in to live shows when they were high school kids, they recently founded their own festival, Lazyfest. "There was a government grant to support bringing back live music after Covid," Geraghty explains, "and we had the idea to make it for underage people. So we had two sessions, one early in the day for all ages, then a late session. We played with two other great young Sydney musicians, Stevan and May-a. It was great."

And now, with the debut LP out, they've set their sights on distant shores. "We've been trying to break out of Australia," he says, "and we've just announced UK dates for May. It'll be our first time there, so we're really excited!" **POW**

"We take progressive pop ideas, and blend in more weirdness."

Songbook is out now via Bandcamp. See www.thelazyeyes.com for more.

PROG IN BRIEF

TANYA GHOSH

One of our recent Limelight bands, **The Mentulls** are touring their album *Recipe For Change* across 2022. They have UK dates from April into July, with shows in the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria to come. Latest dates at www.thementulls.com.

In a show dubbed 'The Greatest Sets Of My Life', **Devin Townsend** (left) will play fan favourites at the Royal Albert Hall on April 16 and 17; Vola and Leprous will support. Tickets for these and Townsend's other April gigs at www.hevydevy.com.

Mike Rutherford's rare 1980 debut solo album *Smallcreep's Day* will be reissued on CD on March 25, through the Music On CD label. Guitarist Anthony Phillips is among the guests on the record, which is not available on streaming sites.

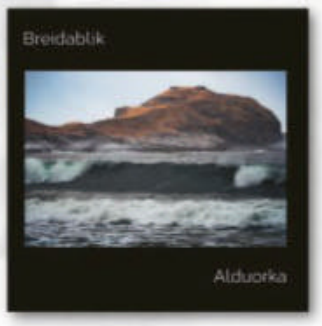
NEW RELEASES FROM APOLLON RECORDS

KORNMO
Svartisen

THE TRONOSONIC EXPERIENCE
The Shadow Vol.1

THE TRONOSONIC EXPERIENCE
The Shadow Vol.2

KRYPTOGRAF
The Eldorado Spell

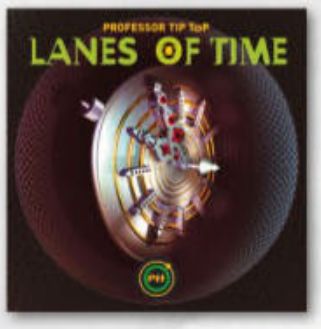


BREIDABLIK
Alduorka
feat. Håkon Oftung (Jordsjø)

SHAMBLEMATHS
Shamblemaths II

LAUGHING STOCK
Zero
feat. Nad Sylvan

WESERBERGLAND
Sacrae Symphoniae Nr. 1



PROFESSOR TIP TOP
Lanes of Time

DISTRIBUTED BY:

apollonrecords.no
UK webshop > burningshed.com

Apollon RECORDS

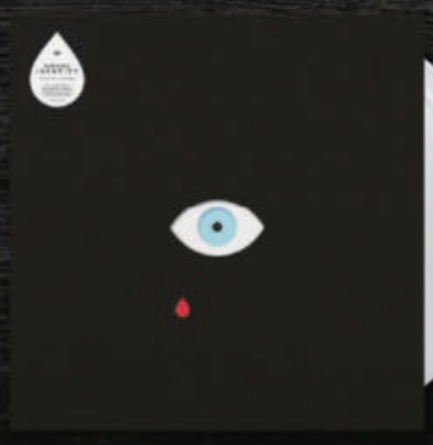
LAYOUT/DESIGN: COVERART.NO

BJØRN RIIS
EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE

The 4th solo album from Airbag's guitarist is yet another masterpice with six epic new songs. In addition to the regular CD version, a limited Digisleeve CD version will be released, containing two bonus tracks. Two vinyl versions will be available.

AIRBAG
A DAY IN THE STUDIO / UNPLUGGED IN OSLO

An acoustic live album/dvd recorded in Airbag's studio in 2020, celebrating their last album, "A Day at the Beach". The recording showcases one previously unreleased song.



AIRBAG
IDENTITY

Following in the series of remastered, top end re-issues of Norwegian prog act Airbag's catalogue, we are thrilled to present you Identity – their acclaimed 2009 debut album. "Identity" has been remastered by Jacob Holm-Lupo (White Willow, The Opium Cartel, + + +), and is finally made available on vinyl again – in a special limited deluxe version with a 12 page booklet and die-cut sleeve. Also out on cd/ltd digisleeve cd.

karisma RECORDS

KARISMARECORDS.NO

DISTRIBUTED BY:

At the root of it all: Held By Trees' David Joseph.

PRESS

HELD BY TREES

Talk Talk veterans team up on inspired post-rock project.

AS A KID in the 80s, David Joseph was thrilled by his parents' vinyl box set of instrumental supergroup Sky. As a teen in the 90s, his tastes extended to Pink Floyd, Chris Rea, Britpoppers Blur, and later, the likes of jazz giant Keith Jarrett and electro maestro Aphex Twin. And always there was Talk Talk, whose work truly nourished this budding singer and musician.

He's 38 now, with a raft of ambient and singer-songwriter albums behind him under various pseudonyms, but Joseph (who endearingly describes himself as "a sleevenote reader") says new project Held By Trees was different from the start. "I'd done an ambient track with [Floyd touring guitarist] Tim Renwick," he tells *Prog*. "Then the first lockdown came along, I started writing, and like most of us I was in a particular headspace, with a quieter world around me. I was leaning into my great love of *Spirit Of Eden*, *Laughing Stock*, *The Colour Of Spring* and Mark Hollis' [eponymous] solo record, which I kind of see as a continuum. The whole Talk Talk story is one amazing evolution."

Renwick introduced him to Talk Talk engineer Phill Brown, who in turn put him in contact with the band's percussionist Martin Ditcham. On hearing the demos, Ditcham — to Joseph's amazement — agreed to play on the record. Then Joseph's friend, studio owner Steve Smith, connected him with journeyman guitarist Robbie McIntosh (Talk Talk, Paul McCartney), who also liked the music. Emboldened, he reached out to pianist Lawrence Pendrous and flautist/clarinetist Andy Panayi, who played on *Mark Hollis*, and to Talk Talk bassist Simon Edwards (who replaced Paul Webb on 1994's *Laughing Stock*). They all said yes.

"This whole project is testimony to the warmth and openness of the British rock fraternity," Joseph says. "Once you know a couple of these guys, they realise you're probably trustworthy. And they aren't in ivory towers — they've played on amazing music, but they're still working musicians. So there was a snowball effect."

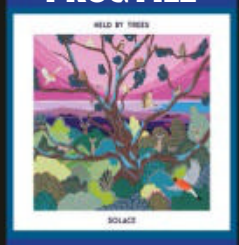
For all this, Joseph was keen for Held By Trees to be perceived as more than just a Talk Talk tribute or pastiche. He invited contributions from artists including Renwick, Dire Straits co-founder David Knopfler, bluesman Eric Bibb and Blur's MD/sax player Mike Smith.

Mastered by (you guessed it) Talk Talk engineer Denis Blackham, Held By Trees' debut album, *Solace*, flows with evocative and hypnotic instrumental music, with jazzy overtones and soothing field recordings of Joseph's local countryside. Using the organic method once employed by Hollis and producer Tim Friese-Greene, the musicians improvised over the bare bones of Joseph's compositions several times, and he then sifted painstakingly through all the takes, slowly unearthing the final record.

Should *Solace*'s reception warrant gigs, there's a tentative live line-up of the group in the works, but Joseph's taking things as they come, while being taken aback by the buzz so far. "I'm not trying to be Talk Talk," he says, "but so much of the interest in this project has come through its connections to those hallowed records. I know I'm walking on sacred ground. I take my shoes off every time I work on this stuff." **GRM**

"This whole project is testimony to the warmth and openness of the British rock fraternity."

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

David Joseph *(guitar, keys, compositions)*, plus an elite squad of high-pedigree contributors

SOUNDS LIKE

Take a wild guess! Talk Talk, with a dash of Pink Floyd

CURRENT RELEASE

Solace is out on April 22 via Tweed Jacket Music

WEBSITE

www.bit.ly/heldbytrees

SECRET AFFAIR

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

(I-SPY, 1980)

In 1980, when Secret Affair went into the studio to record their second album, they had big ambitions.

The mod revivalists' 1979 debut LP *Glory Boys* had glanced just shy of the UK Top 40 and garnered them two UK hit singles, *Time For Action* and *Let Your Heart Dance*, but with *Behind Closed Doors* they were after something more substantial than fleeting success in the pop world. Looking beyond the college circuit and clubs, chief songwriters Ian Page and David Cairns wanted to make a record they could take onto bigger stages and festivals.

In that respect their expanded vision took inspiration from The Who's 1973 masterwork *Quadrophenia*, with its use of synthesisers, sound effects and moments of high drama. While *Behind Closed Doors* is nothing like as Wagnerian in its mood and scale as Pete Townshend's towering double-album epic, the production and songwriting on display demonstrated that Secret Affair were capable of making much more than two-tone teenage anthems.

Much of the recording for the album took place at Trident Studios in Soho, but singer and multi-instrumentalist Page had spent time in New York remixing tracks for the band's American record company, and this broadened his creative outlook.

Working alongside him was engineer Simon Humphrey, whose many credits include working with XTC and David Byrne. Session man Dave Winthrop – a saxophonist best known for his touring work with Supertramp – joined the line-up too, bringing with him a distinctive flourish to their sound.

Winthrop also helped to add some unusual finishing touches to *Only Madmen Laugh*, a track reworked from a version first recorded a few years before, when Page and Cairns were signed to CBS as New Hearts. The muttering voices heard on the intro and outro are in fact Winthrop and Page reading extracts from William S Burrough's novel *Junkie*, their utterances then overlapped and played backwards. The ghostly sound of rushing wind heard on the track comes from a vintage ARP 2600 synthesiser, which Page discovered in the studio.

As well as playing grand piano, Page wrote and directed the orchestral arrangements, which lend the album a cinematic quality. The Cairns-penned *My World* was another hit single for the band, peaking at No.16 in the UK. Cairns based *I Am A Bullet* on the character of Chas Devlin, the gangster played by James Fox in Nicolas Roeg's 1970 cult classic, *Performance*. The song features a similar synthesiser effect to the sinister Moog heard on Jack Nitzsche's soundtrack for the movie.

The glittering streets and star-filled skies of New York were the inspiration for the finale, *Streetlife Parade*, which strikes a melancholy note at first with Page's wistful lyric and hopes for what the future might hold, before Cairns' guitar solo takes flight to lift the song, and the album, to an exhilarating close.

CLAUDIA ELLIOTT

HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew

Shadow leader: Eclipse's Tapio Ylinen.

PRESS/RAMI MARJAMAKI

ECLIPSE MUSIC

Finland's **Tapio Ylinen** on the label that's been home to artists making "weird, marginal" music since 2007.

"The Finnish music scene is tightly knit," asserts Eclipse Music founder Tapio Ylinen, "and there are a lot of world-class musicians here."

Based in Tampere, Finland's second biggest city after Helsinki, the 41-year-old has an ear for talent, and is a highly proficient guitarist himself.

In his 20s his own band, Eclipse, did well before petering out, and by 2007 he'd earned a Masters degree in Musicology (his thesis delved into the musical theory behind prog rock chord structures). He's since eked out a living on the local theatre scene as a musician, composer and director, and on radio and TV as both a writer, presenter and voiceover artist.

He founded Eclipse Music in '07, and the first release was avant-garde band Kauhukakara's *Taistelu Pahoja Kelloja Vastaan* (in English, 'The Battle Against Evil Clocks'). "It was weird, jazzy stuff," Ylinen recalls, "and I thought, 'Okay, maybe we can try to find our little niche with this kind of weird, marginal music.'"

The label began to attract artists into prog, fusion and progressive jazz. Pianist Kari Ikonen's innovative 2011 album *The Helsinski Suite* won the prestigious Teosto Prize, an annual award from Finland's copyright body. Eclipse has also had nine nominations at the Emma-gaala, the country's Grammys equivalent. Their signing Elifantree is up for Best Jazz Album at this year's ceremony, for their very left-field LP, *Hachi*.

Other current releases include *Arc* by fusion guitarist Ossi Maristo, *Delusions Of Grandeur* from quirky collective Talambo, and *Cake Walk From A Spaceship*, from brass virtuosos Sylvain Rifflet and Verneri Pohjola.

As an artist himself, Ylinen's part of Eclipse-signed 'supergroup' Mortality. His new project, 5th Season, features long-time Pink Floyd backing vocalist Durga McBroom. The pair met through Pulse, the successful Floyd tribute band for which Ylinen still plays guitar.

"We perform once or twice a year," he says. "The last gig was a full performance of *The Wall* at a stadium in Tampere for 4,000 people, and it was *awesome*!" **GRM**

Check out the Eclipse roster at www.eclipsemusic.fi.

"I thought we could find our niche with weird, marginal music."

PROG IN BRIEF

Yes/King Crimson drum legend **Bill Bruford** has launched his own YouTube channel, on which the "now happily retired" star curates highlights from his career, "and maybe a few lost gems you haven't seen before." Subscribe at bit.ly/ytbruford.

Andy Latimer (left) will lead **Camel** out for 16 shows on their 50 Years Strong tour in 2023. The run is set to open in the Netherlands on May 3, and concludes at London's Hammersmith Apollo on June 10. Dates and ticket info at www.camelproductions.com.

Searching for *Nectar*: Vikram Shankar and Tom S Englund.

PRESS/PATRIC ULLAEUS

SILENT SKIES

Accomplished Swedish-American duo tap into pop and prog for second album.

EVERY DAY FOR around three months, Evergrey singer Tom S Englund and prolific pianist Vikram Shankar would meet virtually over Zoom to see what musical ideas might blossom between them. The result was their second album *Nectar*, and despite its digital roots, the rich record brims with emotive soul that manages to be intimate yet absolutely grand.

"It was beautiful, because if I wanted to take a chance on something I could just walk over to my Moog synth or something and just try it," Shankar recalls. "It was a very free-flowing process where we were throwing a lot of stuff at the wall to see what stuck."

For a group that pivot on the rudimental pairing of vocals and piano, Silent Skies make a hell of a sound. Not in a brash way, but there's a minimalist-yet-full, cinematic aura streaming through their backbone. And *Nectar* is ear-catchingly accessible too, despite some melancholic detours, with huge melodies fit for an even bigger audience and an unashamed pop veneer defined by some elegant vocals — elevated high up in the mix — which are married to deft piano.

"We're taking influence from so many different things," Shankar explains from his home studio in North Carolina. "They range from the quite arcane, whether it's electronic music like Aphex Twin, or we talk about Radiohead or Anathema and Katatonia, and then we love music like Adele as well. It all comes in our melting pot of things that we like to do."

Silent Skies act as something of an outlet for musical yearnings not always explored in the day job. Englund's Evergrey sit on the edge of the progressive metal sphere, while Shankar has fingers in many pies, having worked with Haken's Ross Jennings and Head With Wings while also burning up the keys in instrumental trio Lux Terminus. He and Englund rock up in prog metallers Redemption too.

"We're setting ourselves free from some preconceived notions of what someone might expect when they put on a Tom Englund record or a Vikram Shankar record," the pianist ponders. "We're open to trying some things that maybe we don't do in some of our other projects."

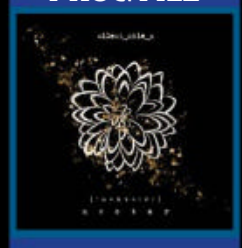
Their genesis serendipitously stemmed from an Evergrey cover Shankar uploaded to YouTube, which caught the attention of Englund. Suitably impressed with the emotion streaming out of the pianist's fingers, he got in touch and debut album *Satellites* followed in 2020.

So what's next for Silent Skies? The duo, self-described workaholics, are already gazing over the musical horizon. "At any given time we're like one or two albums ahead of what the public is hearing," Shankar says. "We're already working on our third album and fourth albums, and we're also working very closely together with a company called Saber Interactive, which makes video games.

"It's difficult to say exactly what the next Silent Skies endeavour is going to sound like, because we have so many different irons in different fires. But we're always trying to do things that excite us." **CC**

"We were throwing a lot of stuff at the wall to see what stuck."

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Tom S Englund *(vocals)*, **Vikram Shankar** *(piano)*

SOUNDS LIKE

High-grade melancholic pop-meets-prog that pulls at the ol' heartstrings

CURRENT RELEASE

Nectar is out now on Napalm Records

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/silentskiesband

Official Progressive Albums Chart

The prog top 30 albums

January 2022

Compiled by Official Charts Company

1 **JETHRO TULL** The Zealot Gene *(INSIDEOUT)*
2 **BIG BIG TRAIN** Welcome To The Planet *(ENGLISH ELECTRIC RECORDINGS)*
3 **RADIOHEAD** Kid A Mnesia *(XL RECORDINGS)*
4 **GENESIS** The Last Domino? *(UMC/VIRGIN)*
5 **MASTODON** Hushed And Grim *(REPRISE)*
6 **PINK FLOYD** A Momentary Lapse Of Reason *(PARLOPHONE)*
7 **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** Bright Magic *(PIAS)*
8 **MOGWAI** As The Love Continues *(ROCK ACTION)*
9 **HAWKWIND** Sonic Attack *(ATOMHENGE)*
10 **DREAM THEATER** A View From The Top Of The World *(INSIDEOUT)*
11 **DREAM THEATER** Lost Not Forgotten Archives – The Majesty Demos 1985-1986 *(YTSEJAM)*
12 **STEVEN WILSON** The Future Bites *(CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL)*
13 **JETHRO TULL** Benefit *(PARLOPHONE)*
14 **CARAVAN** It's None Of Your Business *(MADFISH)*
15 **MATT BERRY** Gather Up *(ACID JAZZ)*
16 **VANGELIS** Juno To Jupiter *(DECCA)*
17 **JETHRO TULL** A *(RHINO)*
18 **JANE WEAVER** Flock *(FIRE)*
19 **NIGHTWISH** Once *(NUCLEAR BLAST)*
20 **KING CRIMSON** Music Is Our Friend – Live In Washington *(DGM/PANEGYRIC)*
21 **RENAISSANCE** Scheherazade And Other Stories *(ESOTERIC)*
22 **YES** The Quest *(INSIDEOUT)*
23 **WARDRUNA** Kvitravn *(MUSIC FOR NATIONS)*
24 **BLACK MIDI** Cavalcade *(ROUGH TRADE)*
25 **FRANK ZAPPA** 200 Motels *(UMC)*
26 **BIG BIG TRAIN** Common Ground *(ENGLISH ELECTRIC RECORDINGS)*
27 **ANTHONY PHILLIPS** Archive Collections – Vol 1 & II *(ESOTERIC)*
28 **HAWKWIND** Somnia *(CHERRY RED)*
29 **OPETH** Blackwater Park *(MUSIC FOR NATIONS)*
30 **FRANK ZAPPA** Zappa OST *(UMC)*

FIND OUT MORE AT **WWW.OFFICIALCHARTS.COM**

WIN! PULSE & PIPER PACKAGE

On October 20, 1994, Pink Floyd took over London's Earl's Court as part of their final concert tour. The magnificent spectacle brought together material from *The Division Bell* and the whole of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Highlights from the show were released as *PULSE* in 1995 and now, nearly 30 years later, footage from that gig and others on the European tour has been lovingly reworked from the original masters and made available as part of a revamped bumper package.

We've got a deluxe Blu-ray edition of Pink Floyd's *PULSE Restored & Re-Edited* to give away to one lucky reader this month. The set also includes music videos, concert screen films, documentaries and rehearsal footage spread across two discs, as well as a 60-page booklet and the iconic pulsing light (which is now operated by replaceable batteries!).

And that's not all, because the winner will also receive the new mono vinyl reissue of their classic 1967 debut album, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*.

To be in with a chance of winning this pulsating set, visit www.bit.ly/PROG128 and answer the following question:

When *PULSE*, the album, was released in 1995 it was promoted by a light show from the top of which famous New York City building?

a) Chrysler Building
b) Empire State Building
c) Central Park Tower

For more information see www.pinkfloyd.com.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This competition will be open from March 11-April 22, 2022. By entering the competition you agree to our competition rules (available at www.futureplc.com/competition-rules). The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition.

Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing

VON HERTZEN ROTHERS
Red Alert In The Blue Forest
DOING BEING MUSIC

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother

TEARS FOR FEARS
The Tipping Point
CONCORD RECORDS

The Deputy Ed
Natasha Scharf

TOUNDRA
Hex
INSIDEOUT

The Musician
Amy Birks

TALK TALK
Spirit Of Eden
PARLOPHONE

The Writer
Julian Marszalek

||ALA|MEDA||
Spectra Vol 1
BRUTALITY GARDEN

The Reader
Mark Buckingham

BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD
Ants From Up There
NINJA TUNE

JONAS LINDBERG & THE OTHER SIDE

Rising Swedish star finds his path on collaborative second album.

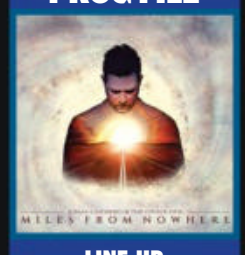
JONAS LINDBERG HAS an intriguing musical life. His progressive project, Jonas Lindberg And The Other Side may be his main creative focus, but as a freelance musician, his adept genre-hopping is both unexpected and refreshing.

"I've mostly worked with a lot of Swedish bands," he explains. "But I've also been playing with a country singer from Nashville, Doug Seegars, who has a career here in Scandinavia. There's also a folk duo that I play with, so there are a lot of different things going on."

His career really began in 2013 with the release of an EP, *The Other Side*, which provided an outlet for Lindberg's more progressive tendencies and ambitions. Given the positive reception to that release, he linked up with musical acquaintances from his time at college and a full-length album, *Pathfinder*, was released in '16.

Although Lindberg writes the majority of the music, for this current release, *Miles From Nowhere*, he's adopted a more collaborative approach. There are also noticeable influences which permeate the album: "I've been co-writing with our singer, Jonas Sundqvist. We write really well together and *Little Man* is the best example of that. We were just jamming and this song came out. It's great to have other guys put in ideas that you wouldn't think of yourself. You get a fresh view on everything. Pink Floyd's a big influence and that's quite obvious on this album as there are two intros that have the feel of *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. Also, I listen to a lot to Spock's Beard and The Flower Kings."

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Jonas Lindberg *(bass, keyboards, guitars, vocals)*, **Jonas Sundqvist** *(lead vocals)*, **Jenny Storm** *(vocals)*, **Jonathan Lundberg** *(drums)*, **Calle Stålenbring** *(guitars)*, **Nicklas Thelin** *(guitars)*, **Maria Olsson** *(percussion)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A charming blend of Pink Floyd, Spock's Beard and The Flower Kings with a very contemporary twist

CURRENT RELEASE

Miles From Nowhere is out now on InsideOut

WEBSITE

www.lindbergmusic.com

The influence of The Flower Kings is especially prevalent on the album's final track, where bandleader Roine Stolt makes a guest appearance, adding his distinctive guitar phrasing.

"I've listened to Flower Kings for about 20 years," enthuses Lindberg. "I've seen them live and they're a big influence. I had this solo at the end of the epic track that I thought Roine would be perfect for. I remembered that when Jonathan [Lundberg], our drummer, recorded an album a few years ago he asked one of his big influences, Derek Sherinian, to play on it. So, I sent Roine an email and asked if he wanted to do it. I was really pleased when he sent the solo over, as you can really hear all his characteristic playing."

That epic Lindberg refers to is the sprawling title track, which extends to more than 25 minutes. Comprising five distinct sections, it's a shrewdly constructed piece, with interlocking returning themes that complement it.

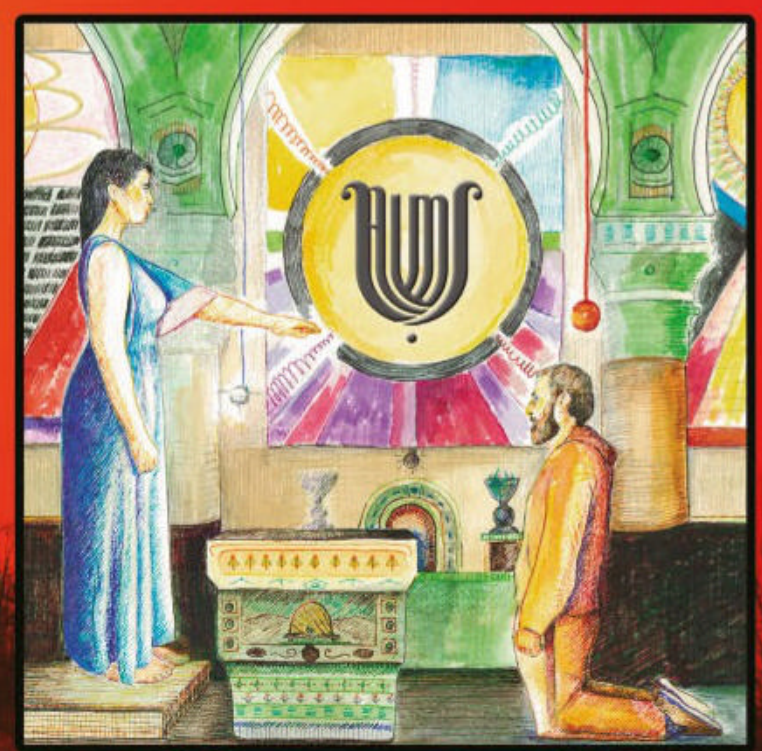
"I really wanted to try and write a long epic," he recalls. "I had the start of it, *Overture*, but it didn't seem to go anywhere. Once I started to expand on that, the rest of it came quite easily. Sometimes when you write a song it is unclear where it wants to go and it doesn't end up in the place where you started. But that's the beauty of progressive rock — you don't need to go back, you can just go on into something else." **RW**

"It's great to have other guys put in ideas that you wouldn't think of yourself. You get a fresh view on everything."

Showing his best side: Jonas Lindberg.

PRESS/THORLEIF ROBERTSSON

alms-official.com



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JOMO TUUN

Inventive instrumental trio with a devious take on progressive metal.

WHEN JOE BURNS, the drummer of psychedelic rockers Guranfoe decided he wanted to explore a "dark and heavy" progressive metal project, no one would have guessed he'd look towards blues and jazz musicians, rather than seasoned metalheads for his musical muscle. But Joe Burns, a well-organised workhorse, as bassist Oli Cross attests, isn't really one for predictability.

"It was just a jam in my parents' lounge initially," Cross recalls of their first session back in 2018. "I thought it would just be a jam and a few beers, but Joe brought his full kit and recorded and filmed the whole thing. But that's Joe Burns in a nutshell."

Burns picks up the story: "We never did anything with those recordings," he explains. "Then over lockdown I thought about bringing it back to life. So I asked Sam [Easter, guitars] if he had any demonic riffs, which he did, so we started mapping out ideas for songs and it took shape very quickly."

One listen to their debut album, *One Tuun* and you'd never know that two of the band were in unfamiliar territory. Yet they've thrived in alien waters; it's all dislocated grooves and sharp edges, a mighty progressive metal record by non-metal musicians.

"I play in a pub rock band, so it's been a challenge," says Easter. "But I'm a big fan of King Crimson so that's the sound I've tried to work into this project; those pointy, spooky guitar parts and strange sounds and heavy rhythms. It's been a treat."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Sam Easter *(guitars),* **Joe Burns** *(drums),* **Oli Cross** *(bass)*

SOUNDS LIKE

King Crimson at their grittiest fighting The Mars Volta and Tool

CURRENT RELEASE

One Tuun is out now via Drongo Records

WEBSITE

www.jomotuun.bandcamp.com

"I've been playing jazz since I was 15," Cross adds, "but I've always been drawn to the heavier side of all genres of music so I've had a lot of fun."

Even the approach to writing was a new experience for Easter, who extends: "We'd record guitars straight into the computer, no drums or anything and we'd set the metronome to '1' so there was no pulse. I'd just improvise. Then we'd splice the recording to manipulate the riff and its rhythms, re-learn it and record it back in. It was a really cool way to work because it meant the riffs didn't have to be something that was natural to play."

"Oli came in after the songs had been arranged," Burns explains. "But there were many parts of the record where the bass completely altered the sections because of the melodic decisions he made. Because we'd been working on the songs for so long, he was able to come in with a fresh perspective, which was amazing for us."

"It feels like the perfect balance of all three of us," Cross believes. "There was a huge amount of freedom, but it was really collaborative as well. There was definitely method to our madness. I'm incredibly proud of the sound of this record."

"I wasn't expecting many people to listen to it," Easter adds. "We didn't do this for the money or the fame, but people have picked up on us and the response we've had has been unbelievable. We've been blown away." **POW**

"I'm a big fan of King Crimson so that's the sound I've tried to work into this project. It's been a treat."

PRESS/FREYA CLARKE

Dislocated grooves and demonic riffs: Jomo Tuun take things to the next level.

Q&A

JULIAN LITTMAN

The singer, songwriter, actor and 12-year member of Steeleye Span has enough strings to his bow to start an archery team. The latest, as he tells *Prog*, is an entertaining album inspired by a famous Victorian poem, which has been released to complement a tarot deck and guide book.

Words: Paul Sexton **Portrait:** Gary Lake

Julian Littman climbed aboard the good ship Steeleye in 2010, and has been integral to their studio and stage workings ever since. In between, he performs with his dear friend, estimable artist-composer Charlie Dore, with whom he goes back to drama school days. Venerable readers may recall them in the children's TV series *Rainbow* in the 70s. His other credits include *Evita* on the big screen, *Pump Boys And Dinettes* and *We Will Rock You* on stage, *The Sweeney* and *Holby City* on the box, and tours with everyone from Pete Townshend to Gerry Rafferty, as well as two solo albums in the past decade. He now adds the unique *Goblin Market Music*. Featuring all of his fellow bandmates, it's another extension of his creative Span.

So, the old ploy of a concept album based on a 19th century poem to accompany an illustrated deck of tarot cards and book, eh?
Yes! It's inspired by Christina Rossetti's narrative poem of 1862, *Goblin Market*, after I was put in touch with the author John Matthews, who had finished work on the set *The Goblin Market Tarot: In Search Of Faery Gold*. I suggested an album to Maddy Prior, who's the keeper of the keys with Steeleye, and she said, "Great idea, but not really right for Steeleye", mainly because of the period. I said no problem, I would make it a 'me' thing. So I got everyone in Steeleye and conned them all into being on it, including Maddie, and then I got Jane Milligan, Spike's daughter, who sings loads of stuff on it. She really has a magnificent voice.

"A mate of mine, who's a producer, said, 'Jules, I love it, it's got to be a stage show.'"

You had a connection with Spike, didn't you?
I've known Jane for years, because before she even became a performer, she was a sound person in theatre. Me and my mate Jonathan Hodge, sadly not with us anymore, adapted a lot of the Edward Lear stuff. It still hasn't seen the light of day properly, but the voices on it were Eric Idle, Vic Reeves, Dennis Waterman, Madeline Bell, and Spike did the narration. He was great. Mad as a hatter.

Your work is so varied, it's great that it embraces so many different disciplines.
For the last 10 or 11 years, there've been two things: one's working with Charlie Dore, and one's Steeleye. When I can, I do acting, when it comes up. But being in Steeleye means, of course, I can't do a West End show, and getting telly or movies that fit in with you is well nigh impossible. But if I'd been an actor [during the pandemic], I'd have been screwed.

What happened next with the new project?
Having established that Steeleye, as such, weren't going to do it, I started adapting this poem, and I divided it into seven parts, although parts six and seven are one piece. I said to everyone, "Do you fancy writing something?" Spud [Andrew Sinclair], who's the other guitar player in Steeleye, he wrote one, and Jessie May Smart who's the fiddle player, she wrote and sang one, and I did the rest, basically. I did the main work during lockdown, and then people recorded wherever they were. I said that it would be a profit share, split 12 ways! So there's no great riches involved, but everyone said okay.

But even though the cover reads: *Julian Littman Presents... Goblin Market Music*, it's quite different from the previous releases in your own name.
I do my own solo records, but it's really hard to sell just a solo singer-songwriter thing. When you've got a bit of an angle, it becomes something different. And I like going in the direction of prog because the song structures don't have to be pop-based. [Prog fans] like it better when it changes all the time, so it's such fun, and we do that in Steeleye anyway. My favourite project with them was [2013's] *Wintersmith*, which is not a million miles from this. For that, I wrote *The Dark Morris Song*, and Rick Kemp, the bass player said, "That's really Steeleye."

Are you big on tarot, then?
No, I don't know much about it at all, it just fired my imagination. John Matthews is the authority when it comes to anything Arthurian, tarot, magic and faeries, with an "e". You mustn't spell it the other way, because they get angry. I just went, "I could do this, and I'll enjoy it."

The album really deserves to exist as a live show, or even a musical production.
A mate of mine, who's a producer of sorts, said, "Jules, I love it, it's got to be a stage show," and I said, "Yes, but it's only 35 minutes." But if we can think of a way... The other thing would be to tell a parallel story of Christina Rossetti and her [creating] this thing, and her life. That's quite interesting, because she was the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the painter, and they grew up in a very libertarian house.

How did you go about interpreting such an epic poem?
It's all adapted, but I've cut out chunks, because it's very verbose. I still wanted it to be artful and descriptive but it's just a case of picking out the best bits, which is something we've done with Steeleye over the years, whether it's the child ballads or whatever. I've done a lot of that. You get these great tomes and think, "This is a great adventure, but how do I get it down to that?" The real master of it was Bob Johnson, who used to be in Steeleye. He did all the big ones: *Long Lankin*, *Tam Lin*, *Thomas The Rhymer*. So I came into that family, and that made *Goblin*... a lot easier.

Julian Littman Presents... Goblin Market Music is out now via Park Records. See www.parkrecords.com for more information. Find the companion book and tarot deck at www.theatlantisbookshop.com and www.watkinsbooks.com.

Gibson

IN MEMORY OF

IAN McDONALD

King Crimson co-founder **Ian McDonald** died in February, leaving behind an unequalled legacy. Although the multi-instrumentalist's official tenure with the band was brief, he made countless contributions to their later material and also made guest appearances with Steve Hackett and Darryl Way. Crimson biographer Sid Smith remembers the musician without whom *The Court Of The Crimson King* would have sounded very different.

Words: Sid Smith **Images:** DGM Archives

It's 2002 and the sun is shining on a rehearsal space in Turnham Green, London. The 21st Century Schizoid Band in its original incarnation with Michael and Peter Giles, Mel Collins and Jakko Jakszyk are blasting their way through an incendiary version of *21st Century Schizoid Man*. Ian McDonald, with the look of a slightly preoccupied professor, puts his alto sax to his lips and fires off a volley of careering notes that spatter and shape-shift around the backing in the track's twisting instrumental section. It seems so incongruous that such a furious salvo of notes could issue from someone who offstage was quiet, reserved, and more often than not, self-effacing.

In 2003, after the band had been on tour playing King Crimson-related material and one or two songs from his own solo catalogue, Ian said, "One of the most enjoyable aspects of doing these shows is meeting audience members after the gig, to sign autographs, and shake hands, etc. It's really good to hear their comments and stories. It's very gratifying to hear such things as, 'I've been waiting 30 years to hear these songs!' In some cases, so have I."

The death of Ian McDonald from cancer in his beloved New York is the closing chapter on a remarkable career. He was a crucial factor in the formation and subsequent success of King Crimson in 1969, and thereby close to the epicentre of the progressive rock movement. In 1976 he reinvented himself by emigrating to the USA and co-founding AOR rockers Foreigner. For some, the juxtaposition of those two polar opposite bands seemed wildly incompatible. As far as McDonald was concerned, he was uninterested in any tribal or generic consideration and it was simply all about music.

In assessing the qualities of King Crimson's founding members, Robert Fripp once observed that what Ian brought to the table was "musicality, an exceptional sense of the short and telling melodic line, and the ability to express that on a variety of instruments." Commenting directly on Ian's passing, Fripp added, "In 1969, I trusted Ian's musical sense ahead of my own."

King Crimson's debut album, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, is filled with McDonald's multi-instrumental presence on flute, saxes, woodwind, vibraphone, various keyboards, and, of course, arguably the album's signature sound, the Mellotron. Alongside all of that technical virtuosity, built and honed during his stint as an army bandsman in the mid-1960s, Ian was blessed with an ability to write and compose, something he often did on guitar.

As an army bandsman, Ian (left) also played guitar in The Rebels and went by the name of Rick McDonald. Here he's seen performing at Smokey Joe's, near the army base in Gibraltar, in 1964.

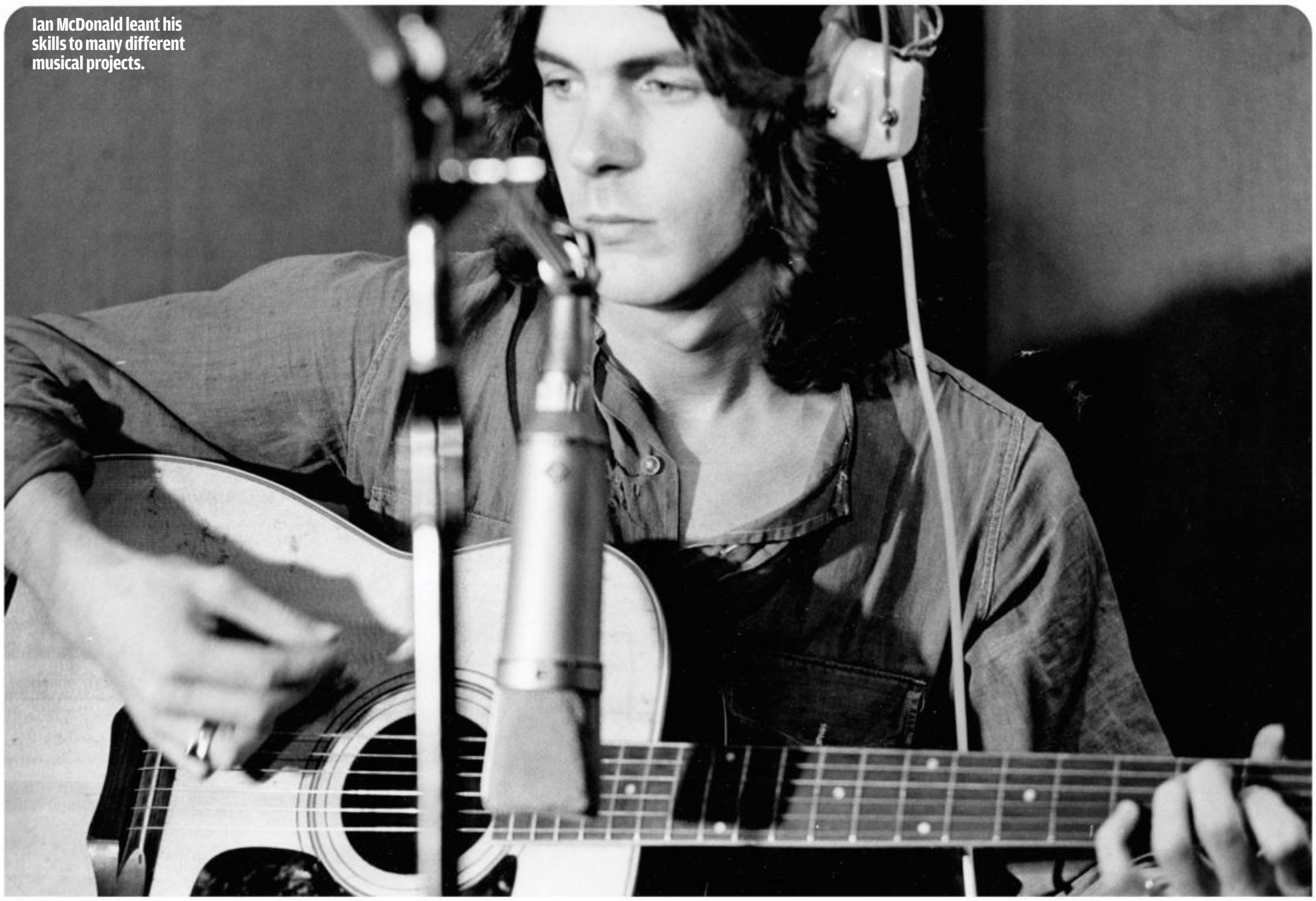
Destined for great things: King Crimson's first promo shoot.

Following his discharge from the armed forces, he fell in with Peter Sinfield and, later, Judy Dyble. Upon hearing what Sinfield described as his Donovan-like 'country and western' ditty, Ian politely but firmly discarded Sinfield's original tune and provided his own. The result was *The Court Of The Crimson King*, and the creation of an anthemic tune whose impact upon the emergent progressive music scene in the 1970s and beyond would be deep and lasting. 1969 was a year of emotional turmoil, including the highs of playing in front of an estimated 250,000 people supporting the Rolling Stones in

"A remarkable career": a young Ian McDonald ready to make his mark.

"He was a **great** friend and an **incredible** musician/ songwriter. **He will be** very much missed."

Steve Hackett



Ian McDonald leant his skills to many different musical projects.

Hyde Park, and the depths of lovesick despair while touring North America. Unable to cope, he and drummer Michael Giles abruptly quit. It was a decision he regretted for a very long time but in more recent years had finally come to terms with.

For someone so closely associated with the sound of the Mellotron, it was an instrument Ian disliked having had to wrangle with its volatile nature on stage one time too many. Thus he opted to use a string orchestra on *McDonald & Giles*, which the pair released in 1970 and that was, at that point, the most expensive album Island Records had recorded, thanks in part to Ian's insistence on using orchestral players. The resulting record is criminally underrated and unfairly overlooked. For years it was a source of great personal pain to Ian McDonald that he was rushed into finishing the album. In 2002, when it was officially remastered for CD, he flew to London in order to make some small adjustments and edits. "After 32 years, I can finally relax now," he later told me.

Following *McDonald & Giles* the pair went their separate ways. 1971 saw him appear on records as diverse as T.Rex's *Electric Warrior* — including the hit single *Get It On*, for which he borrowed Mel Collins' baritone sax — and, at the other end of the commercial spectrum, the free-jazz and rock ensemble opus *Septober Energy* by Keith Tippett's Centipede, underlining his view that all music had a value regardless of stylistic considerations. Production work beckoned, including *Canis Lupus* by Darryl Way's Wolf in 1973, and after his guest spot on King Crimson's *Red* in 1974, he went on to produce Fruupp's *Modern Masquerades* in 1975 and American proggers' Fireballet's debut *Night On Bald Mountain* in the same year. In 1999, McDonald released *Driver's Eyes*, a solo album that mixed many different styles and moods and featured contributions from Michael Giles, John Wetton, Peter Sinfield, Lou Gramm, Peter Frampton and Procul Harum's Gary Brooker.

He returned to regular live work as part of the 21st Century Schizoid Band between 2002-2004 where he toured Europe, the US and Japan,

LEN DELESSIO/GETTY IMAGES

Foreigner in New York, 1976. L-R: Ed Gagliardi, Mick Jones, Dennis Elliott, Lou Gramm, Ian McDonald, Al Greenwood.

BOBBY BANK/GETTY IMAGES

Ian McDonald and Ted Zurkowski perform at Bowery Electric in New York for the launch of Honey West's *Bad Old World* in May 2017.

“It’s very gratifying to **hear** such things as, ‘I’ve been waiting 30 years to hear these **songs!**’ In some cases, **so have I.**”

Ian McDonald

performing King Crimson material from all eras of the band. Schizoid Band member and current King Crimson vocalist/instrumentalist Jakko Jakszyk said of McDonald, “We worked together for two years. It was a privilege to play and tour with Ian. He was so encouraging and supportive of me in bringing those iconic songs of his to life. He was a gentle and at times troubled soul. I spent many hours on long late-night calls from him in New York. I last saw him in 2019 when King Crimson played at Radio City Music Hall. You could have forgiven him for feeling weird or uncomfortable at witnessing most of his contribution to the first Crimson album up on that stage. But he couldn’t have been nicer about it. He said it sounded wonderful and better than ever and made him feel proud. A sweet man who was always lovely to me and had my back when things got difficult.”

After providing soundtracks for performances of Shakespeare’s plays in Central Park, Ian helped form a new group, Honey West, whose debut album, *Bad Old World* featured a set of bluesy rockers and was released in 2017.

Ian always understood the importance and impact that the music he was involved in had upon listeners. It was a bond he felt deeply. Meeting fans was something he enjoyed and during stints with Steve Hackett in the 90s and, later, the Schizoid Band. He was often profoundly moved by the reaction to the music he had a hand in creating.

Attending shows by the current King Crimson, he was pleased with what he saw and heard. “They played music drawn from later albums but they did do *Epitaph*, *Moonchild*, *...Court...*, and *...Schizoid Man*, and it sounded great, especially *Epitaph*, which they performed beautifully. That was really nice and in a sense an interesting experience for me being in the audience and being detached from the performance and these tunes that I had co-written. It was a pleasant experience to hear the early tunes played so well. I had heard from other people that when they played songs from *In The Court Of The Crimson King* there was a kind of gasp in the audience and not just here in New York,” he told me in one of the many phone calls we exchanged over the years.

A gentle, sensitive man and never one to brag or boast about his considerable instrumental abilities or musical achievements, he was nevertheless rightly proud of his contributions. I had recently asked him about the making of that totemic Crimson debut. “One of the things I’ve always done when I’m recording a song is I ask myself, ‘Could I listen to this 500 times?’ So you have to be honest with yourself when you’re making a record. All the while in the studio when we were recording the album I was thinking, ‘Will I still want to listen to this in 50 years’ time?’ So part of me was thinking 50 years ahead if you like.”

The thought that people will still be listening to his music for another 50 years and beyond is something that would have pleased Ian enormously.

Ian McDonald
June 25, 1946-February 9, 2022

Ian McDonald Remembered

The prog world pays tribute.

KING CRIMSON
“The death of King Crimson co-founder, Ian McDonald, has been announced. His contribution to the original band was invaluable and profound. Our condolences to Ian’s family.”

STEVE HACKETT
“I’m really sad to hear the news of Ian McDonald’s passing. He was a great friend and an incredible musician/songwriter. He will be very much missed.”

RICK WAKEMAN
“So sad to read of the passing of Ian McDonald. Lovely man, a great player. He will be genuinely missed by so many.”

ASIA
“Sad news today. Friend of Asia Ian McDonald, founder member of Foreigner and King Crimson died at the age of 75. Great memories of Ian joining Asia on stage for *The Court Of The Crimson King*.”

GARY KEMP
“RIP the great Ian McDonald, originally of King Crimson in their pomp. Not only did he play that dirty stalking sax on *21st Century Schizoid Man* but that hefty baritone riff on T.Rex’s *Get it On*.”

MICK JONES
“When I had the idea of forming Foreigner, Ian McDonald was among the first I turned to. He was and always will be a giant on the English progressive rock scene. He was a musician of great substance and versatility.”

STEVE STEVENS
“Ian McDonald, King Crimson and Foreigner founding member has passed away. In my opinion their debut record is the most important recording in progressive rock. At times dissonant chaos followed by aching beauty.”

Ian during the recording of King Crimson’s debut in Wessex Studios, 1969.

WILLIE CHRISTIE/DGM ARCHIVES

Solid Mental Grace

In 1972, **Yes** released the most ambitious album of their then career. *Close To The Edge* found them reaching peak creativity with a long-form record that was influenced, in part, by Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, but it also saw Bill Bruford wave goodbye (at least for a couple of decades) to the band that had launched his career. Fifty years on, Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman, Jon Anderson and Bill Bruford look back on the band's inspired fifth album and the spiritual journey it took them on.

Words: Sid Smith **Image:** Martyn J Adelman

Do not adjust your set! Alan White joins his soon-to-be bandmates at the mixing desk during the making of *Close To The Edge*.

"Every single one of us were into it and knew what we were all trying to achieve."

Rick Wakeman

Whenever he's going out in the car, it's Rick Wakeman's habit to grab a handful of CDs so he's got something to listen to while he drives. Not knowing which albums happen to be in the pile he's snatched up adds a nice element of surprise on the journey, kind of like shuffle play, but with the addition of the internal combustion engine. On a recent jaunt, Wakeman found himself listening to *Close To The Edge*. "I hadn't heard it for a long time and as I was listening, I actually pulled the car over on the A14 and I sat there, and I actually said out loud, pardon the language, 'How the fuck did we do that?' Because when I listen to it, with the technology we had at that time there is no way we should have been able to do that album. Absolutely no way." As Wakeman talks about the album he was a part of 50 years ago, he sounds genuinely moved. "We had ideas of what we wanted to do and then we had to sit down and figure out how to do it and record it. That was the genius of that album and I put it down as the very last Yes album where we were completely ahead of technology. For me, what makes *Close To The Edge* the finest Yes album is [that] it's where every single one of us were into it and knew what we were all trying to achieve."

There are some musicians who will quietly tell you that they really can't remember much about some of the albums they've made. There are lots of reasons for that of course. Too much rock'n'roll lifestyle back in the day will seriously curtail the grey matter's ability to dial up events, and to be fair, the people who were all in their 20s and are now in their 70s probably weren't taking notes at the time on the off chance that someone would be asking them questions about what they were doing 50 years ago. Yet for Rick Wakeman, who admits he was no stranger to many indulgences as a young man, the events of those times at Advision Studios remain surprisingly fresh in his mind.

"I can tell you exactly what a typical day during the making of *Close To The Edge* looked like. I used to come in and park outside the studio at about 10am There was a little snack shop café on the corner of Gosfield Street and I'd go in and get a bite to eat. When I went into the studio they were making coffee and Steve [Howe] was there – he would spend a considerable amount of time tuning his guitars and getting ready for whatever he wanted to do. Then Bill [Bruford] would turn up saying that there was no point in turning up beforehand as Chris [Squire] wouldn't be there, which of course he wasn't. Jon [Anderson] would arrive and he and I, or Steve and him, might go into a room and talk about what we were going to go through that day. Eventually, early afternoon, Chris would show up after having just rolled out of bed. It was a nightmare but you had to live with it. Bless him, to his dying day his time-keeping was crap. Chris would then sort of play around with his bass and then if we were lucky, by mid-afternoon, we might actually play something."

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Steve Howe, Jon Anderson and Bill Bruford at the Rainbow Theatre, London on January 14, 1972.

> "Jon and I were really in awe of Mahavishnu Orchestra and we thought we'd hurtle in with something like that and just surprise everybody with high tempo and lots of movement."
>
> **Steve Howe**

In 1971, the year before they recorded *Close To The Edge*, Yes had undergone two important changes in personnel. This was not about finding mere substitutes to continue along a particular path. Injecting new talent as a matter of policy would always triumph over sentiment. In those early years it was indicative of a ruthless pragmatism that at its best sought to ensure Yes' reach would always exceed their grasp, striving to always transform and improve rather than settle for the ordinary or average. By actively embracing change and taking the difficult decision to part company with original members Peter Banks and Tony Kaye, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, and Bill Bruford were making a deep commitment to what Yes *might* become rather than what it was. The influx of adrenaline and creative energies accompanying such decisions didn't just raise their individual game as players but formed the impetus that would put the band in a position where it would not only survive but evolve, grow and hopefully prosper.

Steve Howe's impact on the band on *The Yes Album* was nothing less than seismic, shaking their sound from top to bottom with a galloping virtuosity that bordered on the rapacious, greedily swallowing any and all challenges with relish as they rushed toward him. His debut was the very definition of hitting the ground running. Wakeman's arrival shortly afterwards was every bit as significant. That he could replicate his talented predecessor's work was a given. However, his real value was in his ability to remodel the base metal that accrued in the Yes rehearsal room and writing sessions; there were numerous riffs, runs and sequences that all needed to be honed and threaded together. His formal musical background allied to his experience as an in-demand session player, where efficiency and speed went hand in hand, meant he quickly understood why one thing worked over another without the need to laboriously engage in a process of elimination.

Within a few minutes of listening to something, Wakeman was able to explain or demonstrate what might be possible, where something might go. While there was sometimes an inherent value in sifting through

MARTYN J ADELMAN

Steve Howe likes what he hears during the recording of *Close To The Edge* at Advision.

Crucial role: a fresh-faced Rick Wakeman in the early 1970s.

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

what amounted to trial and error, he helped speed up proceedings in a way that the band had, until then, all too rarely encountered. Between the two of them, the new members embodied a technique that could be either as surgical or as flamboyant as the moment demanded. Both also brought with them a masterly grasp of texture and dynamics, an element that had been front and centre on the multifaceted showcasing that was *Fragile*. With these two parts of the jigsaw now locked firmly in place, Yes seemed capable of anything. As novelist Paul Auster once put it, "If you're not ready for everything, you're not ready for anything." It's a line that perfectly describes the point at which the group found itself in 1972 as they entered Advision Studios to begin work on *Close To The Edge*.

Given *Fragile*'s success it would have been very easy for Yes to have pursued what was obviously a winning formula. There's no doubt that wasn't something Anderson was prepared to countenance. The point was to keep moving, keep expanding, keep developing. In common with other groups of the era, the notion of keeping things in the neat and tidy furrows of three-minute pop songs or prolonged bluesy grandstanding wasn't where the juice was. In the days before progressive rock became a broad-brush genre description, it was perhaps a goal, a route to an artistic state of being.

Yes were always on the lookout for ideas that could be incorporated and adapted into their musical vocabulary and the development of *Close To The Edge* was leavened by many encounters and experiences. One example of this filtering process in action happened during their US tour during November and December 1971, where on some dates they were supporting The Kinks, whose criminally underrated *Muswell Hillbillies* had just been released. However, the new record was largely ignored in favour of a crowd-pleaser setlist that included a smattering of 1960s numbers including the beautiful, elegiac *Waterloo Sunset*, originally released in 1967. Just four years separates Ray Davies' sublimely bittersweet love song and Yes' setlist, which leaned heavily into *The Yes Album* and *Fragile*. Yet the pairing of these two bands at opposite ends of the rock continuum demonstrates how fast the pace of change and experimentation in form and content had moved. While acknowledging the observational acuity and melodic brilliance of Davies' songwriting, in comparison the sharp differences between the two groups made it seem as though Yes had beamed down from some far-flung future.

However, that contrast was made all the more stark on November 28, 1971 when a third act was booked to support Yes and The Kinks at the State University of New York in Stony Brook, NY. The Mahavishnu Orchestra had just released their debut album, *The Inner Mounting Flame*, and had been placed on the college circuit as a way of moving beyond the wholly unsuitable jazz clubs where they had begun. If Yes made music from the future, then the sonic assault of Mahavishnu Orchestra, led by John McLaughlin's blisteringly fast lead guitar, appeared to be coming from another galaxy entirely. As Squire and Anderson watched from the wings, the singer turned to the bassist and with his jaw still slack from what he was hearing said, "Chris, we've got to start practising."

They always knew that after *Fragile* they were going to undertake a long-form piece. At a little over 10 minutes, *Heart Of The Sunrise* was the dry run, bringing together contrasting flavours and sections. Such an idea wasn't new of course. Bands including Van der Graaf Generator, Caravan, Pink Floyd, ELP and Jethro Tull, to name but a few, had all got there before them but the yearning for that elusive symphonic statement had been on Yes' to-do list almost from the beginning. Early in their career, they'd leaned toward the grand or epic, be it through startlingly reimagined cover versions, the addition of an orchestra, and through their own original material. Success wasn't always guaranteed, but the fact that they had been stretching their compositional chops in the process meant that when the time came they were more than warmed up. Given *Fragile*'s success it would have been easy for Yes to have carried on doing what they were doing. But with ambition spiralling high, that just wasn't on the agenda.

Steve Howe also witnessed the show and was similarly impressed by what he saw and heard. Six months later in Advision Studios, as they worked on *Close To The Edge*, Howe channelled some of the creative sparks he'd seen flying that night from McLaughlin's twin-necked Gibson into his own playing on the astonishing guitar solo that leads the opening of the title track. "Jon and I had basically dreamed up the concept that primarily this song needed a lot more space. It had the unusual intro, it had all these ingredients. And we pretty much mapped them out," he explains. "We'd discussed how we wanted to open the album. On *Fragile* there had been the acoustic harmonic that began *Roundabout* and here we thought: what would be the most unusual intro you could have? How about a Mahavishnu Orchestra-style intro? Jon and I were really in awe of John McLaughlin's great band and we thought we'd hurtle in with something like that and just surprise everybody with high tempo and lots of movement. So, as a guitarist, I could grab certain ideas for the opening like the leaping between the octaves. I knew that was how I was going to start."

Whatever shortcomings Jon Anderson may have had as an instrumentalist, he was able to visualise the shape and structures into which the band would fit and make their own. "I was always aware of

Even Closer To The Edge!

Yes to perform their iconic 1972 album on their UK and Ireland dates this June.

Yes have announced that they'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Close To The Edge* by performing the album in its entirety on their upcoming Album Series tour in June. It's in place of the previously advertised *Relayer*.

"It's one of the best albums we made," exclaims Steve Howe.

The dates are now billed as the 50th Anniversary Close To The Edge Album Tour, which suggests that *Relayer* – which celebrates its own 50th anniversary in 2024 – may be performed at a later date.

Yes will play the following shows in the UK and Ireland in June: 15 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, 17 Manchester Bridgewater Hall, 18 Nottingham Royal Concert Hall, 20 Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, 21 London Royal Albert Hall, 22 York Barbican, 24 Birmingham Symphony Hall, 26 Newcastle City Hall, 28 Dublin Vicar Street, 29 Cork Opera House. **JE**

"I was listening to a lot of classical music while touring and Sibelius' *Fifth Symphony* I liked. The structure of the symphony actually mirrors the album as a whole."

Jon Anderson

where we were heading structurally. I was listening to a lot of classical music while touring and Sibelius' *Fifth Symphony* [*Symphony No.5*] I liked. The structure of the symphony actually mirrors the album as a whole," Anderson explains. "It's got a very wild first movement, a gentle second, and the third movement is very majestic. I thought the band could get into performing with that sort of musical positioning."

Another influence on his thinking was the then-recently released *Sonic Seasonings*, a double album by Wendy Carlos comprising four side-long suites, brimming with evocative Moog-created ambient environments. Anderson discussed with engineer Eddy Offord how they might come up with something similar. "I wanted to create this sense of energy or a force field before the band started, and then have the group climb out of it with a wild and crazy solo section, raving away as though we didn't know where we were going. You'd get to a certain point and you're going to stop dead and a very straight choral thing would come in and then the band would carry on again."

Under Anderson's direction, the swirl of tape loops featuring speeded up keyboards and other electronic textures created an impression of a humid jungle streaked with exotic beasts and birds, creating a distinct world of its own. The surging velocity of that opening section remains one of Yes' stand-out moments in a catalogue bursting with adventurous instrumental passages. The vivid, cartwheeling guitar solo bristling with all kinds of barbs and jagged edges is certainly a high point in Howe's long career. "Chris Squire was always a great one for saying, 'Steve if you want to improvise, we need a good structure.' So, there's a lot of movement in those chord structures that move around."

Howe recalls that when it came down to rehearsals prior to the recording of the solo he had some assistance from Anderson. "Jon was great sitting there being the singer. He couldn't play these fast riffs but he could strum on his guitar and make suggestions: 'How about this key for that bit?' or 'How about down here?' I give due credit to the arrangement skills that we had on the collaborative level. When we were together we could arrange stuff though sometimes we'd forget the arrangement the next day and we'd scratch our heads and wonder what we did," laughs Howe. "So in the end we recorded most rehearsals on a cassette. Can you imagine trying to listen to all that noise of us all playing in a room? It was a nightmare. But we could still discern what the structure was and what the idea was. So we kept looping it day by day in rehearsals and then we'd look at all the material we could put on the album. That was our skill: fine-tuning arrangements in order to develop something rough into something polished."

MARTYN J ADELMAN

Close To The Edge became a repository for a variety of half-formed ideas that in some cases had been around for a while. A descending guitar line that had previously existed as part of the song *Black Leather Gloves* in Howe's pre-Yes outfit, Bodast, was now repurposed for *Total Mass Retain*. "You tend to have plenty of ideas and sketches, which don't necessarily have a home, so you pitch them in," says Howe. "Jon and I worked like that all the time. One of my songs had the line, *'Close to the edge, down by a river'*, which actually referred to where I was living at the time, next to the Thames." When Anderson heard the phrase, the symbolism of the river immediately connected to metaphors within Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, which he'd been reading at the time.

"The river leads you to the ocean, all the paths lead you to the divine. So the idea was that as human beings we are close to the edge – the edge of realisation," explains Anderson. This connection of ideas was typical of how Anderson worked, says Howe. "He always did this. He'd take an idea of mine but then he'd set it into a different global sensibility. It wasn't just the River Thames but now the referencing of being close to the edge of some kind of enlightenment."

Anderson recalls Howe presenting what was, in essence, a humble love song whose opening line was, *'In her white lace…'* but immediately began a counter-melody off the top of his

> "I knew leaving would cause an upset. I was terrifically flattered and gratified that they wanted me to stay but on the other hand, Jon understood exactly that people have to do what they have to do."
>
> **Bill Bruford**

head. “When I started singing, ‘*Two million people barely satisfied*’ I had in my in mind what was happening around the world, starvation in African countries. So many people lived so well while so many people didn’t. I get high and low on the whole concept of life — ‘*I get up, I get down*’. So it worked out that Steve and Chris sang that while I sang my melody over these exact same chords. It was magical… it just happened.”

Divining the precise meaning of a lyric isn’t important, argues Howe. “There’s often a reluctance on the part of songwriters, and I think it’s a good thing to be reluctant in this regard, to describe exactly what the song is about. It’s very important to write your lyrics the way you want to and then not have to explain them. But I think the ethereal quality was something I got more and more into with lyrics in the last 30 years than I was maybe 50 years ago and I could see what Jon was up to and there were messages hidden in the songs that would somehow resonate with us. Jon took a lot of grief sometimes about his lyrics and sometimes I did as well with mine but neither us cared. This is what it is. A lot of people did relate to the sense of there being a wider, broader, more spiritual [side] to the lyrics. Music is a mystery that we’re all part of. The listener is in that mysterious place, but so is the musician.”

The spiritual aspect discerned within the track and elsewhere in the band’s output is something Wakeman recognises and has an affinity with. “The majority of Yes music that I’ve been involved with, certainly in the 70s, did have a very spiritual element to it and I think all of us in our own ways had different spiritual thoughts, beliefs and standards and what have you, but it all worked for all of us in our own way. I think that when you’re playing music you get a feeling that there’s something more than just a load of notes thrown together. There’s something about this record, maybe *Going For The One* might be the other one, where I felt we were all of us singing from the same hymn book.”

The cathedral-like ambience of *I Get Up I Get Down* is fully exploited with the arrival of Wakeman’s majestic pipe organ recorded at London’s St Giles-without-Cripplegate, where he’d already recorded the parts for *Jane Seymour* from his solo album, *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, released the following year in 1973. “The church organ part wasn’t easy to do. The recording itself in the church was fine because I had the tempos. We set up a Revox tape recorder and the mics and it went fine. The hard part was back at Advision Studios. I mean, you couldn’t just drop it in. It had to be absolutely in at the right place. So it was a matter of running it along with the master track and having various attempts at trying to slot it in, which we eventually did.”

Knob twiddling at Advision. L-R: Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Eddy Offord, Alan White and Chris Squire.

The startling Moog line that corkscrews into the piece not only breaks the spell of reverence and rapture but re-establishes the connection to the harsher instrumentation heard in the earlier sections. “It was always planned that coming out of that, we needed to get back into electronic instruments again,” Wakeman continues. “So at the end of the church organ you would have the Hammond solo. That was quite a delicate operation to make sure the Hammond didn’t sound weak or the organ didn’t sound weird.” It could have sounded abrupt and unconvincing, he says, but it sounds like a genuine development. “The great thing about the actual track, *Close To the Edge*, is it has some brilliant natural progressions within it.”

Anderson’s impassioned performance makes for an electrifying experience throughout but especially over the build in the finale of *The Seasons Of Man* section. There’s an excitement that borders on the exultant in the voice that sings, ‘*Now that it’s all over and done, called to the seed, right to the sun, now that you find, now that you’re whole.*’ It’s an outstanding moment and a favourite for most members of the band. “That big end section, that’s that place where it’s like we’re climbing the mountain, you get there and you sit back and take in the view. My head was spinning every time I listened to it or sang it,” comments Anderson with more than a hint of wonder in his voice. His vocal achievements here are still admired by Steve Howe. “To this day I think how Jon sung it originally in the studio in G minor is just amazing. When we started touring it we had to drop that end section a tone below in F.”

While Steve Howe is well-known for his insistence on having the time to find the correct tone or guitar within a piece, he readily admits he was not alone in this regard. “Chris was really picky about his bass. I can’t remember how much bass he overdubbed. We might get a track down and Chris would still not be happy with a part of it. So that same day before the equipment was broken down he might fix something or play something better or change his part somewhere. He was usually the last person to get his

And then Bruford resigned!

The Syn drummer-turned-Yes-snapper, Martyn 'Max' Adelman remembers that fateful day.

"I was in the room when Bill Bruford resigned!"

As pronouncements go, it's quite something. Yet for photographer (and sometime drummer) Martyn Adelman, that's exactly what happened. And it seems there was little of the expected rock'n'roll brouhaha to accompany such a potentially explosive statement.

"Bill was a drummer's drummer and a grown-up," Adelman continues. "And I think he'd had enough of the constant in-fighting that could go on in Yes. But it was all handled in a very adult fashion. There didn't seem to be any recriminations going on.

"Bill had made annotations of his work and was sharing them with Alan White. I never spoke to Bill personally but I think he wanted out. And Alan was a good solid drummer, very different to Bill, but excellent with Yes. It was an exchange of ideas and an adult changeover. Very rare in rock'n'roll."

Adelman had met Chris Squire when he'd journeyed to Boosey & Hawkes music store in London with his friend Peter Knight, who would go on to join Steeleye Span.

"He was looking for sheet music, and Chris was working there. That's where I met him," Adelman tells *Prog*. "It was certainly clear he was going to make it in the music business. He was so determined and had that air about him."

Adelman moved from a band with Knight to joining The Selfs and later The Syn alongside Squire, although at the time the latter band bore little resemblance to the prog juggernaut that Yes would become.

Chris Squire takes a break in the studio.

"We played a lot of blues and soul covers," Adelman recalls. "But after I left, I could hear in the music Chris was writing that things were starting to head in that direction."

Having quit The Syn to become a photographer, a move inspired by his then-girlfriend's father, Adelman still played a part in the band's development, suggesting a college friend, Peter Banks, join them on guitar. Banks and Squire went on to play in Mabel Greer's Toyshop, which segued into Yes.

In the early 70s, Adelman found himself back in the studio with his old friends to shoot some of the portrait photos that appear on the back cover of *Close To The Edge*, his first significant job as a snapper.

"I had a good time with Chris," he remembers. "I didn't really get to know Jon at all. But seeing Chris, surrounded by money, and people rushing around at his beck and call certainly made an impression on me."

Adelman would go on to work for such prestigious magazines as *The Face* and *Blitz* but in 2004 found himself involved in a Syn reunion, alongside Banks and Squire, but his time was short-lived, and stepping down, he was replaced by future King Crimson drummer Jeremy Stacey.

"It was a bit intimidating, I wasn't a professional drummer," he smiles. "But it was fun. A big challenge. There's a little bit of me that sometimes wonder what might have happened if I'd kept on drumming. But photography's served me well." **JE**

Mr Tambourine Man! Bill Bruford during the recording of *Close To The Edge*.

ALL IMAGES ON THIS SPREAD: MARTYN J ADELMAN

part down. He liked coming in after everyone else so he could hear the whole song and say to himself, 'I think I could play better here' or 'That doesn't work there I've got to change it up.'

"Sometimes Chris would go to great lengths to perfect something and it was conditional on how he was feeling or if he could get it cut in there, or maybe he'd say, 'I'm not going to get this in and I'll do it afterward.' He had a tendency to overrun on some of it. I remember that more on *Drama* because it's years later and Chris was in there doing one of those fast runs we had. He was doing it all evening and I wondered why. But it was just Chris' way. He wasn't really an improviser. He had to have his parts in his mind and he had to get them right and they were really good parts and worth waiting for, but it could be a long wait."

"That big end section, that's that place where it's like we're climbing the mountain, you get there and you sit back and take in the view... my head was spinning every time I listened to it or sang it."

Jon Anderson

Wakeman elaborates on why Squire's approach could be a source of much frustration and tension. "Chris would play and then want to redo the whole thing. We'd go, 'But we're happy with what we played.' So he'd fuss around and redo everything and often, his original was kept because it was better. Chris always felt there was a better take to be had and I suppose it was a great attitude to have, except he wasn't right. So then, I'd go up to the pub around the corner and come back at 10 or 11 and Chris is still doing his bass part again with Steve and Jon trying to egg him on."

During the making of the album there were inevitably many late-night sessions, though these were often of little to no value when they listened to them the next day, as Wakeman explains. "We'd come in in the

Jon Anderson seeks lyrical inspiration during downtime.

RICK WAKEMAN'S ON THE ROAD AGAIN

It's 20 years since Rick Wakeman played the UK with his band, the English Rock Ensemble. With a new line-up, Rick talks about touring at the age of 72.

"I have a pool of people who were members of the English Rock Ensemble and we put together whoever is right for the particular show. The idea of touring at the moment is nuts, but I'll be brutally honest, I love going out with this band and it's always great to do it. I would have happily gone out ages ago and done other shows. We had planned to do a whole of The Red Planet show but Covid put paid to that, as it has with so many things. I'm surprised we're not doing it on an island in the middle of the Pacific or something.

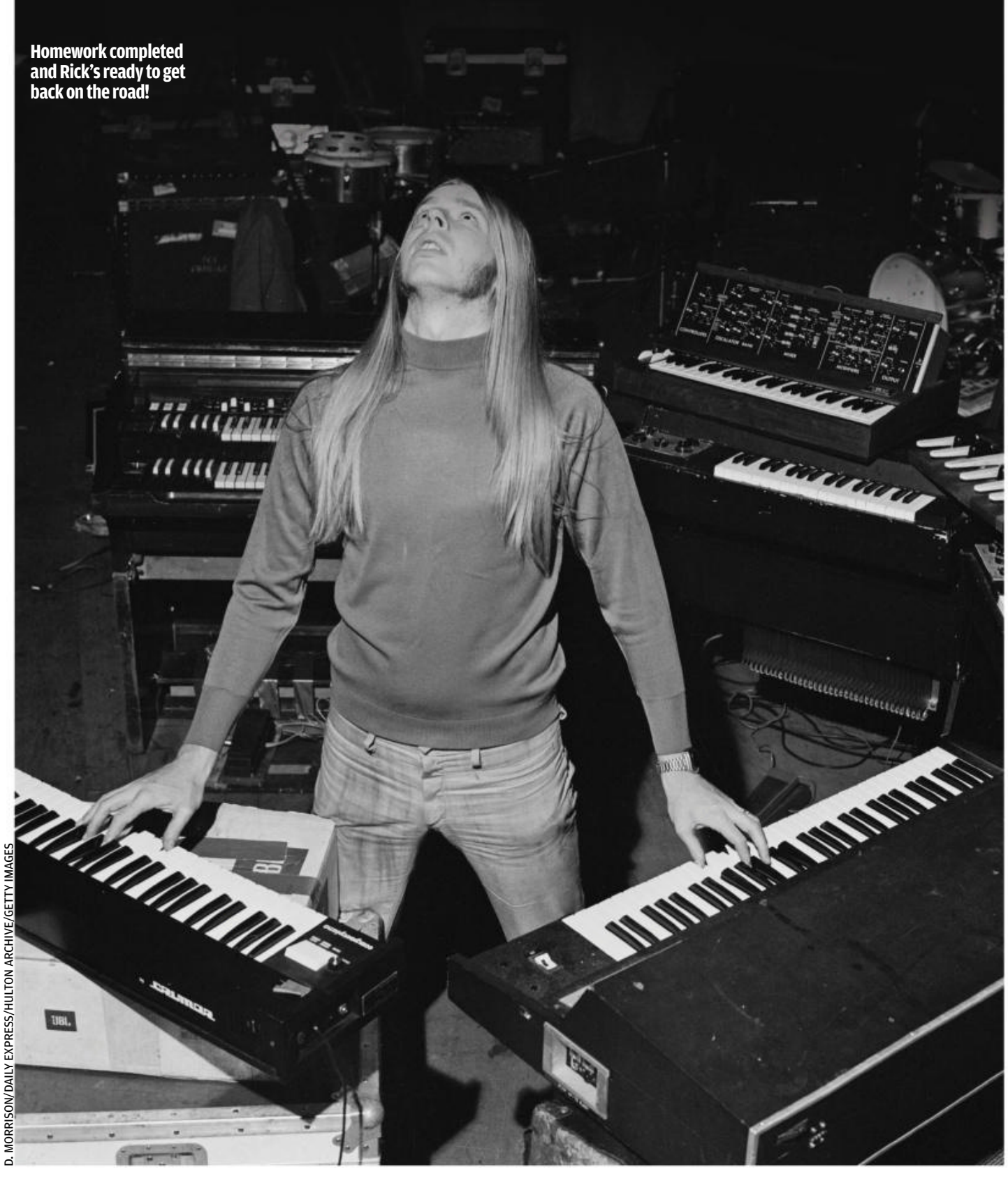
"We've changed things a little bit. I know some bands play a whole album live, but I don't think that ever works properly. In general, 50 to 70 per cent can be played live and 30 to 50 per cent can't. You're not going to make it work properly unless you have a ridiculous amount of musicians onstage. I looked specifically at *The Red Planet* for this and I thought there's a lot of keyboard parts and I've only got two hands. So, I brought my son Adam in. Between us, we will work out who does what, when, where, and how, so we can get as close as possible to the sounds that we're after. The other thing I got with that is Adam also plays guitar. So if we need two guitars but one keyboard it's alright, he'll switch to guitar.

"Everyone has done their homework in advance and so we'll have two days solid rehearsal as a band. Gone are the days when you'd sit around while somebody is learning a part. For this tour, Hayley [Sanderson] is doing the vocals and she's great. Women have a much wider range than men, considerably so, so that gives us more options. Hayley's got the most ridiculous range so it's the perfect time to do things like *Starship Trooper* in the set.

"The economics of running a band isn't cheap. You've got the band to pay, you've got rehearsals to pay for, you've got the crew to pay for, you've got transport to pay for. If a promoter doesn't think he can raise enough money from the shows to cover the cost, they don't go ahead, so we're thrilled to be doing it.

"I love playing live and audiences raise you to another level. There's no doubt about it. I really enjoy it. Having said that, I always said I would never go on stage and want to be applauded for what I used to do. If it ever gets to that stage that's when I'll shut the piano lid."

The English Rock Ensemble 2022 are: guitarist Dave Colquhoun, drummer Tony Fernandez, bassist Lee Pomeroy, vocalist Hayley Sanderson and Adam Wakeman on keyboards. For the full list of dates, see www.rwcc.com. **SS**



Homework completed and Rick's ready to get back on the road!

D. MORRISON/DAILY EXPRESS/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

morning and have a listen to the board mix of what we'd done the previous night and it would be useless, the hi-hat would be shrill and deafening and so on because the more you do in a day, the top end of your hearing tends to drop. So what you do is you keep winding the top end up. So nothing was ever any good. David Bowie never, ever worked late at night because he said it doesn't work. Fresh ears in the morning, always the best."

Recorded in sections, sometimes a bar or two at a time, these were then sifted and their merits assessed before each section was then painstakingly sewn together in an arrangement, rather like an ornate patchwork quilt. Only at the end of the time-consuming process were they then able to see the full picture. Even then it still required edits and overdubs before it was finally mixed. Making the album was likened by Bill Bruford as like having five people trying to write a novel together. As torturous as that was, after all the haggling over which bits or sections worked best next to one another and which parts should be thrown out, the mixing process itself was another challenge. In these days of automated on-screen faders getting the balance on individual instruments is a relatively civilised affair. In Advision, and every other studio at the time, it was a case of all hands to the desk as several members of the group simultaneously clustered around banks of faders and controls following a kind of aural shooting script when it came to bringing takes in or out.

One might assume that camaraderie and team spirit would be a by-product of this work but often it was just the opposite. "From day one, I loved the way that we wrote, I loved the way that we recorded, but I hated the way we mixed," says Wakeman darkly. "I think it was a hard job for Eddy Offord. We didn't get the width we should have had in the mixes and that was because he'd more often than not have 12 hands on the faders and lots of knob twiddling and God knows what. At the end of the day it got so compressed it didn't matter who pressed or twiddled what. Everyone was listening only to their own part and not the overall thing, not thinking about the finished product."

Sounding rather rueful, he says this was always a problem in Yes. "I was from a different school of how you mix. The person I learned the most from was David Bowie and his various producers. I worked with Ken Scott, Gus Dudgeon and Tony Visconti, and David Bowie had it spot on: he never went to any mixes. What he did [was] he would go away, leave them to get on with it. He could trust them, they knew what he wanted to do and when he listened to it afterward, that was the

closest he could get to hearing the music for the first time. That's what I've always done and I wish Yes had done that. But I don't think we ever had — no disrespect to Eddy Offord — I don't think we had somebody we all felt we could 100 per cent trust to get what we wanted."

Yet despite the tensions that come from five individuals working through their respective idiosyncrasies, the finished results on the completed album were exceptional then and it remains so now. Not only had Yes ticked their long-held desire to do an extended suite occupying all of one side, and achieved it without any gratuitous padding, they served up two other tracks that also stand up as a superb examples of what progressive rock was about. If he was certain about the shape of the title track, Yes' principal animateur Anderson was less certain about *And You And I*. "I'd written this very simple song," he recalls, "but we got to a certain point where I said we had to create a theme, somehow it had to get bigger."

It was exactly why they needed someone like Wakeman in the room, recalls Bill Bruford. Although there were contributions from all the band, Wakeman's skills as an arranger and musical fixer were crucial to the track's grandeur and stately development. Howe's contribution was no less vital. We hear the 25-year-old man say, "Okay" at the start of side two. "There's a kind of honesty to that moment," agrees Howe. "That song is produced in a whole different way. A lot of time was spent getting that theme right with the right bass and right chords and right key changes. There were endless rehearsals but when we got to the studio and played it, we had to find a way into the song. We were ready to begin, that's why I said, 'Okay' but my rambling harmonics we liked and decided to keep in. Basically, the entire front of the song was performed with me with a metronome."

Siberian Khatru remains a masterclass in concise, dynamic writing and arranging. Bristling with rapid gears shifts in the tempo, soaring themes, beatific vocals, and even the rush of a harpsichord as each new section builds upon the last the cumulative effect of the piece is dizzying. When, after seven minutes, everything is stripped away, it's akin to being ushered inside an immense engine room where the pulsating bass throbs and the inner mechanisms of how the band works are briefly exposed as the Bruford-composed cyclical guitar line whirls about, the cogs and wheels of Yes turn in perfect synchronisation. "We stole a bit from Stravinsky by having that pounding staccato pounding and at the same time throwing those accents on voice and drums and having me driving through it with that constant guitar motif. It's a good example of hi-tech arranging circa 1972," says Howe. When the entire band kicks back in, there's an extra exhilaration in Squire's ascending basslines. However long it may have taken to get that best take, it was worth every minute.

©ROGER DEAN 1972 *CLOSE TO THE EDGE*

Above: Roger Dean's imagery for the album gatefold and the simple cover that heralded the first use of the now-iconic Yes logo.

> "I think it's a good thing to be reluctant to describe exactly what the song is about. It's very important to write your lyrics the way you want to and then not have to explain them."
>
> **Steve Howe**

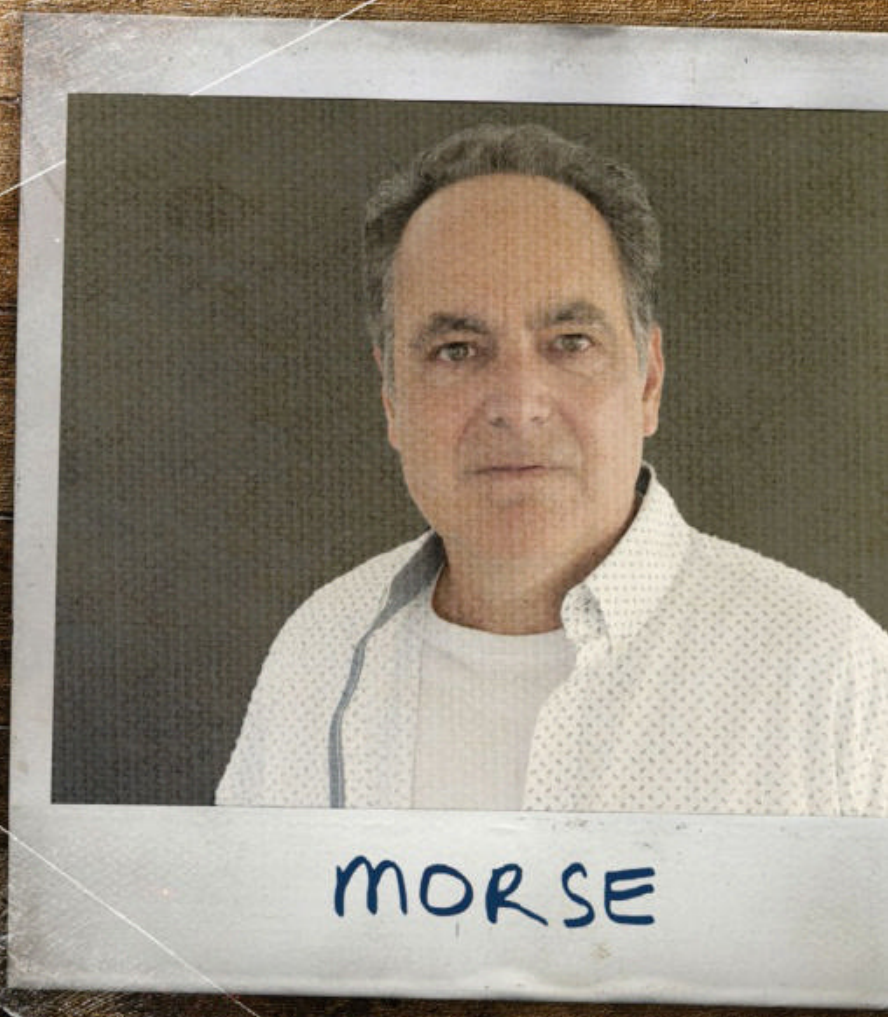
The gleaming triumph of *Close To The Edge* was tarnished for some by Bruford's decision to leave and join what would become the *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* line-up of King Crimson. As far as Bruford recalls, there was no big meeting of the band, no big announcement where it was formally announced like an election result. "I seem to remember long conversations in my flat in Harcourt Terrace, Fulham. I knew leaving would cause an upset. I was terrifically flattered and gratified that they wanted me to stay, but on the other hand, Jon understood exactly that people have to do what they have to do. He took the artistic line, which was very sweet of him. He was lovely about it. 'You must do what you must do. We're very sad, it's been fantastic, but if you have to do this, then go ahead.' I think for a long time Chris probably thought that I'd been spirited off by Robert [Fripp] and over-influenced by him."

In the 50 years since the album was released, countless legions have admired the economy and grace of Bill Bruford's playing on it. Howe counts himself in that number and thinks Bill's sound is a key factor in making the album a musically coherent statement. For someone who has come to have such a major impact on drummers, other instrumentalists and fans alike, Bruford's instantly recognisable playing does not actually occupy that big a space, says Howe. "If he's hitting drums and crashing cymbals all the time that's going to wipe out a lot of the frequencies that somebody else wants to enter into. He didn't have two bass drums and six Rototoms and so on. He had the basic kit. But the thing was, that was his art. The basic kit is all you need and he made that work in a wonderful way because he didn't see himself as a rock drummer so much. His drumming is outlandish. It sounds straight 4/4 but you listen to the way he adds that extra snare. That's Bill's genius."

Yes weren't about to let the small matter of a crucial departure get in the way. With Alan White already a friend of the band and a regular presence at Advision as they worked on the album, he was the obvious choice to help propel Yes on to their next great adventure. Steve Howe, now 74, and the only member in the current incarnation of Yes to have played on the album, jokingly remarks that as well as playing the pieces on the record for the last 50 years, he's probably been talking about them for at least that long. Yet he doesn't regard this as a burden of any kind, he says. "I think everybody that plays on it is very proud of it. It's a very adventurous record. It's the first time we did a one-side song and two songs on the other side. I revel in it. I'm delighted it's so popular and so convincingly performed on the original record. It's always a reference to go back and hear how we did it with the original tempos and everything around it. I think *Close To The Edge*, *And You And I* and *Siberian Khatru* are exceptional indications of a band that reached a certain peak in their creativity. There was an argument [that] you've always got to try something before you can say no and as we did we'd argue about the merits of the music. But we did allow each other enough space to be happy and, at the end of the day, everybody was happy with *Close To The Edge*."

The Quest is out now via InsideOut. See www.yesworld.com for more information.

Three Isn't A Crowd



Expectations and natural assumptions can be dangerous. The pairing of original Spock's Beard members Neal Morse and Nick D'Virgilio instantly generates thoughts of spacious, frequently wacky progressive rock that recounts tales of Catfish Men. However, the duo recently linked up with Haken frontman Ross Jennings to record *Troika*, an album that relies more on tight vocal harmonies than expansive musical journeys. Harking back to the type of guitar-based rock created by Crosby, Stills & Nash, the LP may come as a revelation to some of their fanbase.

"I got a surprise email from Neal at the end of December 2020 asking me if I would be interested in becoming the third voice in the project," says Jennings. "Although I've sung with Neal and met him on various Cruise To The Edges, his point of reference to me as a songwriter and musician was really just Haken and the prog metal side of things. He wasn't aware if I had any interest in this sort of music, if I could write this sort of music, or if I could play guitar. It was a huge leap of faith on his part to even think of me for this. I was taken aback and confirmed to him that I'm a huge country music fan anyway and love three-part harmony vocals. I'd recently been working on a solo album [last year's *A Shadow Of My Future Self*], which was more in that singer-songwriter vein and I was thrilled to be invited into this."

When Spock's Beard founder members Neal Morse and Nick D'Virgilio revealed they were reuniting for a new project, no one could have imagined that Haken's Ross Jennings would join them. **D'Virgilio, Morse & Jennings** discuss combining three-part harmonies with a hefty dose of blues, country and prog on *Troika*.

Words: Rich Wilson
Images: Chad Hoerner, Yulia Jennings and Chad Jenkins

"It was nice to step away from long songs with fancy riffs and focus on shorter, simpler stuff."

Nick D'Virgilio

"Neal started the project initially," adds D'Virgilio "He reached out to me and asked if I would be interested in doing some sort of singer-songwriter, Crosby, Stills & Nash vocal-inspired record. I said yes almost right away, as I've always been into that kind of music. I love regular songs and learning the craft of a great song, plus I've always been a sucker for a great love song. It's not very progressive rock orientated but I love this style as well. It was actually inspiring to think of it like that. We're locked into the things that we normally do with Spock's Beard, Big Big Train or Neal's band [NMB], which are focused on progressive rock with long songs with fancy riffs. It was nice to step away from that a little bit and focus on shorter, simpler stuff. It was a fun experiment."

The pairing of Morse and D'Virgilio in such a project is a natural one given the sympathetic vocal arrangements they were involved in on tracks such as *June* from 1998's *The Kindness Of Strangers*. That relationship dates back to the early dates of Spock's Beard, when the two would indulge in nocturnal, campfire-style singalongs at the rear of their tour bus when trekking between gigs.

"We used to do that all the time," recalls D'Virgilio, laughing at the memory. "That was back in the party days; we all smoked and did stupid things. It wasn't totally sex, drugs and rock'n'roll as it was pretty tame, but after a gig we'd get on the bus and drive to the next town. None of us were able to go to sleep right away so we would stay up until three or four in the morning just singing songs together. Neal was one of those guys who, along with his brother Alan, knew a million songs on guitar. They could play a ton of stuff, so we would just go on for hours, harmonising with each other and having a great old time."

Superficially, at least as Jennings attests, the Haken vocalist may appear to be an unusual choice given his background. His talent may be unquestionable, but musically *Troika* is a significant departure from the heavier leaning that is central to his main band's success.

"I didn't know much of Ross' solo material until I started working with him in this project," explains D'Virgilio. "Of course, I'm a fan of Haken. I love that band and I have seen them perform a bunch of times live. I've known Ross for quite a while and he's a super-nice guy, easy to hang with and talk to. It was fun to get his take on these tunes and get his feel in these songs. His tracks are really cool and they have a bit of a muso and progressive edge to them. That was just a nice change from Neal's vibe."

For Jennings, he admits that there may have been initial concerns that he would feel like an outsider, potentially interfering in and disrupting the musical chemistry that has existed between Morse and D'Virgilio for decades. However, given the remote writing process, these fears were speedily allayed.

"If I had been in the same room as them, then I might have felt more that way," he says. "I tried not to let that overcome my confidence in any way and I was very humbled to be invited to contribute original ideas to these guys who are known to be fantastic song-writers. It was very liberating for me and gave me a real boost of confidence as well."

Working in solitude, thousands of miles away from your bandmates and simply exchanging files electronically has an air of soullessness about it. For the most part, the days of bands setting up in residential studios, enjoying camaraderie and musically sparking off each other appears to becoming a rarer

D'Virgilio, Morse & Jennings' *Troika*.

phenomenon. Somehow though, in spite of such a clinical writing and recording method, *Troika* does capture the organic feel the band were aiming for. So how did D'Virgilio find the hermit-like writing process?

"Well, I don't like it but I've been forced to do it quite a bit," he says. "With Big Big Train, I'm doing my drum parts in the States while they are over there in the UK. It would be awesome to be in the same room together, like a proper band, but it's easier now to send stuff remotely. You can do it quickly, it's not as hard and you don't have to wait days to hear a change that somebody made on your song. You can keep a flow going. It's not the same as being in the room together but it worked for this record."

"It wasn't too alien for me to work that way," suggests Jennings. "It was bittersweet though, because I've been dying to work with Neal all these years. The inability to travel and be in a room to write and record with those guys was a shame, as I've been a fan of Spock's Beard for a long time."

The album isn't musically one-dimensional, though, with each of the members contributing tracks that help the flow. There are heavier moments — not least *King For A Day* and *Second Hand Sons* — which provide a restrained, fiery balance to the tranquillity. The latter was a Morse composition, as Jennings explains.

"Neal put that one in at the last minute because he felt that the album needed a rockier balance. We also had *King For A Day*, which grew from my blues rock influences. It was funny though, as I felt that the music I wrote, such as *Julia*, was paying homage to Spock's Beard and the stuff that they were writing was moving away from that. So, in the end, there is that reference to their work but it came from a fan."

Nick D'Virgilio also reveals that he hopes that the trio reconvene to record another album and perform live.

"It would be fantastic to do something else and get a chance to perform these tunes," he enthuses. "I have a good chunk of tunes and material that is ready to throw in the hat for the next thing and I know Neal is always writing, so I really hope that happens."

Troika is out now via InsideOut. Head to www.insideoutmusic.com for more information.

"Neal wasn't aware if I had any interest in this sort of music, if I could write this sort of music, or if I could play guitar. It was a huge leap of faith on his part to even think of me for this."

Ross Jennings

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Keeping The Dream Alive

Five years on from *Quantum Gate*, **Tangerine Dream** have reassembled for their second, post-Froese album, *Raum*. The current line-up tell *Prog* about Edgar's clear vision for the band's sound and how they're shouldering the responsibility of continuing the Tangs' 55-year legacy into the next decade and beyond.

Words: Dom Lawson **Portrait:** Katja Ruge

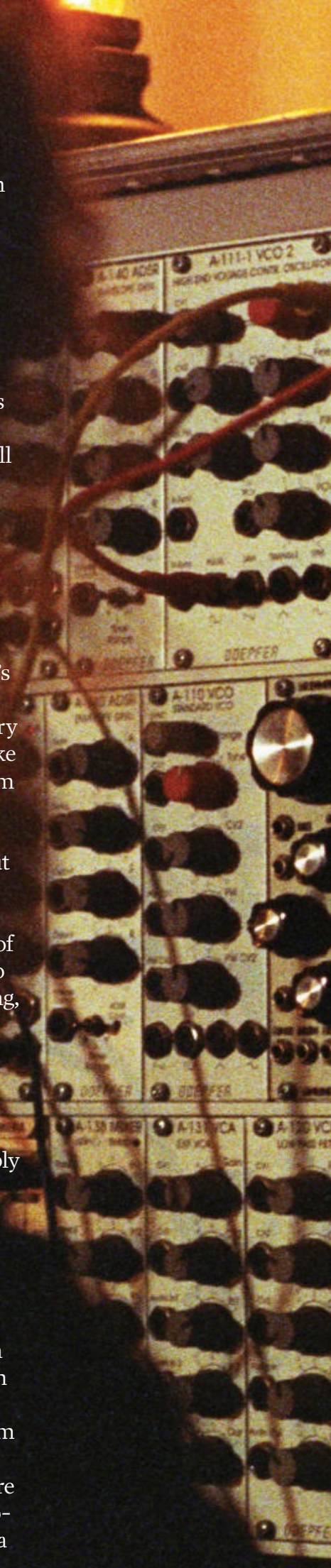
When the last remaining original member of an esteemed band passes away, fan conversations inevitably turn to questioning the legitimacy of any ongoing incarnation. Just ask any Yes fan to unpick the ins and outs of *that* band's ongoing existence. Tangerine Dream found themselves under similar scrutiny when founder and electronic pioneer Edgar Froese died in January 2015. Without the Germans' talismanic leader, many fans pondered, should the remaining members really continue operating under the band's name? In the end, of course, Tangerine Dream are very much alive and well.

In spite of naysayers' objections, 2017's *Quantum Gate* turned out to be a low-key triumph, as Froese's deputy, Thorsten Quaeschning, commenced the process of using his late boss' huge archive of unused ideas to inform the creation of new music. Five years on, and with a firmly established line-

The art of sequencing: Tangerine Dream, 2022.

“There was a very clear vision from Edgar about making Tangerine Dream music. We lived together for about 10 years, so a lot of what I learned from him was involved in making this new album.”

Thorsten Quaeschning



> **“There was a fixed plan, that Tangerine Dream would go on and which direction it should take. We know it’s a big weight to carry.”**
> **Thorsten Quaeschning**

up of musical director Quaeschning, multi-instrumentalist Paul Frick and violinist Hoshiko Yamane, Tangerine Dream are back with another brand new studio record, *Raum*. This being the internet age, however, there will be still be die-hard fans struggling to accept any version of their favourite band without Froese at the helm. But as Quaeschning explains to *Prog* over a crystal clear Zoom line to their studio the question of whether Tangerine Dream should continue after their founder’s death simply never came up.

“The good thing is that it was never *our* decision to carry on,” he shrugs with a wry grin. “Edgar was the prototypical boss, and he made plans for every single situation that could come or would come. So there was a fixed plan, that Tangerine Dream would go on and which direction it should take. So it was a lot easier for us to decide to do this. We know it’s a big weight to carry. There’s 50 years of music history, all the albums, all the heritage, and we have to bear all of that in mind. Hopefully we’re doing okay.”

“It is about responsibility and privilege, and I can definitely relate to that a lot,” adds Frick. “For me, I’m making music with these wonderful, incredible musicians who are teaching me many things musically, but also about the group, the music and its history. In the beginning [Frick joined Tangerine Dream in 2020], I *really* felt the responsibility, and reassurance could only come with concrete results. The only answer to all of this responsibility is music.”

It seems highly probable that some fans will never accept a Froese-less Dream, but new album *Raum* does everything conceivable to keep the great man’s spirit alive. A wondrous blend of classic TD tropes, mesmerising avant-electronica and irresistible, spiralling melodies, it pulls off the neat trick of sounding simultaneously contemporary and gently tethered to the band’s illustrious past. Tangerine Dream have had many incarnations and indulged in many stylistic detours over the last 55 years, and it is only in recent times that the music has exhibited a straightforward connection with the days of *Phaedra* and *Rubycon*.

“Yeah, that’s true,” Quaeschning says with a nod. “Edgar had an idea in 2015 and we had a big change in the line-up. He skipped the percussion, the saxophone and the regular guitar playing, and we came back to the sequencer-driven electronic sound but using contemporary sound design. So it’s always been about being aware of the roots of the band, but taking them into this century.”

While still drawing heavily from Edgar Froese’s vast collection of unused sequencer hooks and other musical ideas, *Raum* (in essence, German for ‘space’) sounds utterly current and timely, and not just because the sound of synthesisers has noisily ambushed mainstream pop in recent years. Pleasing all the people, all of the time, might be an unrealistic goal at this point, but Quaeschning is confident that a tasteful and timely balance has been struck.

“To get that balance is important, because we knew from the start that we wanted this to be accepted as Tangerine Dream music,” he says. “It’s a big challenge because there are so many people to whom the music is very important, but we also wanted to make it sound new and fresh. So the problem wasn’t the concept, but how to get there. We definitely tried several different strategies and then found out which worked best. At the beginning we did a lot of improvising and real-time composition in the studio, a lot of trial and error. Then we found we also need classic and harmonic songwriting, otherwise we would have repeated ourselves too much. It’s about both.”

A member of Tangerine Dream since 2005, and one of Froese’s sound engineers for a couple of years before that, Thorsten Quaeschning is arguably the only person with the insight to keep his mentor’s vision on track. He humbly notes that Froese effectively left him with a list of instructions, specifically in terms of the art of electronic sequencing.

“There was a very clear vision from Edgar about making Tangerine Dream music. We lived together for about 10 years, so a lot of what I learned from him was involved in making this new album. There are fixed scales and there are rules about how to program a step-sequencer. I’m not from an electronica background, originally. Everything about patching modular systems and programming step sequences, I learned it all from Edgar himself. He was doing it his whole life, 40 years of programming, so I guess he knew a lot about it! There are little tricks that sound very Tangerine Dream-esque that he taught me over the years. It’s the Edgar spirit and his ideas about electronic music — he believed that everyone has a role inside the electronic orchestra.”

Raum is as deep and expansive as anything the band have released since their 70s and 80s heydays. From the sprawling, ambient colossus of *In 256 Zeichen* to the mesmerising fractal haze of the title track (first heard on last year’s *Probe 6-8* EP), it’s a frequently

Clockwise from top left: Thorsten Quaeschning, Paul Frick, Hoshiko Yamane.

PRESS/RITA LINO

PRESS/MELANIE REINISCH

The Tangs are looking forward to working the live *Raum*!

beautiful voyage through futuristic soundscapes, with Hoshiko Yamane's semi-improvised violin work adding ethereal warmth to even the most robotic of skittering sequencer parts. And once again, the somewhat counter-intuitive truth that synthesiser music can be emotional is laid bare. As much as Tangerine Dream have always been, in one form or another, a group of nerds locked in a studio with lots of unfathomable equipment and flashing lights, *Raum* is a hugely soothing, uplifting and reassuring piece of work.

"It's so hard to explain why synthesiser music resonates with people [on that level]," says Frick. "It seems like it just does. I did mostly acoustic music for most of my life, but over the last 10 years electronic music really got me. Getting the history and understanding the evolution of it all, that's been important. But the question is so big that I don't want to spoil it with an answer! [Laughs]"

"We often get a very emotional response when we play live, but there's also the problem of it not being four-to-the-floor dance music," adds Quaeschning. "Because it's easy to drop a beat and people will start moving. But the responses are all very different, from country to country. The UK is great, also because in normal venues you have people standing, which is much better and you can see a little movement in the crowd, with people tipping from one foot to the other! In Germany, people are just sitting all the time at our concerts and it looks like a still photo sometimes. But it's okay to not to have movement from the very first moment of the show, or to have the traditional frontman shouting, 'How are you doing? It's great to see you!' It's much harder to stay in touch emotionally when you're not singing or talking, but it's overwhelming when it happens."

If everything goes to plan, Tangerine Dream will spend a sizeable chunk of 2022 on the road, debuting some of their new material in the process. As Quaeschning admits, the new album was pieced together over the last two years, during which time there were very few opportunities to play live shows. As a result, weaving new songs into their setlists has become a slightly greater challenge than expected.

"This is the first time we've been locked in the studio for two years in a row. We only played a few concerts, not more than four in two years. Normally you have all the festivals and then you have one or two months of touring, but this time we were in the studio the whole time, and so there was simply no need to think in terms of a live version of these songs. We were just focused on the studio work and how it will sound on the album, maybe going more into detail as a result. So we've made a pure studio album, and now it's our quest and our challenge to recreate these songs and play them live."

Meanwhile, they have to pick the rest of the setlist, from a back catalogue that is almost comically vast…

"I think there's around 1,400 pieces of music. It is quite a lot!" Quaeschning says. "We try to play some of the new music, the new era, but we can't skip the 70s or the 80s, and not just because people love it so much, but because we love it too. I'm not so enthusiastic about playing things from the 90s, but there's enough from the 70s, 80s and from 2000 onwards. We have more than 1,000 tracks to choose from."

"Thorsten makes a different setlist for each concert," Frick notes. "To me it seems very thought through, in terms of what sort of place is it, which people will come, and what is the culture there. Obviously because of Covid I have not played many gigs with Tangerine Dream, but I've been a guest a few times before and, among those concerts, there wasn't one that was like another. There's always different pieces being played, and also a few that will always be there, because the people would get mad if they weren't!"

Ultimately, grumpy fans can sit this one out. It doesn't really matter. The story of Tangerine Dream, as planned and directed by Edgar Froese, simply hasn't reach its end point yet. And in *Raum*, Quaeschning, Frick and Yamane have created something that is both easily identifiable as the real thing and a glimpse of what might come next.

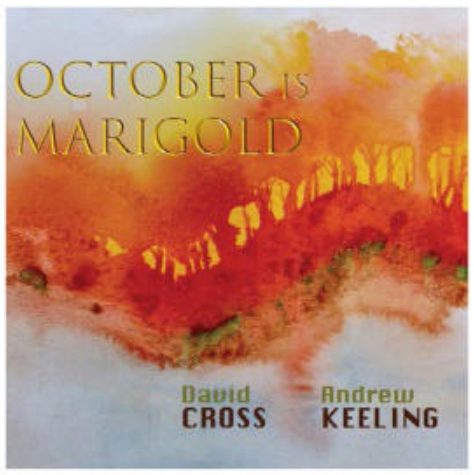
"We certainly haven't had the idea to stop," concludes Quaeschning. "I'm already excited about the next thing. Edgar left us with so much to inspire us. We still have a lot of work to do!"

Raum is out now via Kscope/Eastgate Music. See www.tangerinedreammusic.com for more information.

Travelling In Time

King Crimson alumnus **David Cross** and contemporary classical musician **Andrew Keeling** have reunited on *October Is Marigold*. The pair tell *Prog* about their unexpected partnership and why the right chemistry is so important when it comes to making music.

Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Chiemi Cross



Cross and Keeling's second album, *October Is Marigold* – out now!

It's 1973 and David Cross is onstage at the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. It's regarded as being among the finest classical music venues in the world, and the violinist is treading those hallowed boards as a member of King Crimson. To his immediate left stands John Wetton and just behind, sweating profusely and wiping himself down, sits Bill Bruford at the drum kit. On the other side of the large stage is Robert Fripp. As the applause dies away, the guitarist leans forward and, with the Mellotron on its flute setting, begins to play. Wetton cautiously explores the upper fretboard and then Cross delicately harmonises with Fripp's notes. As Bruford sits in silence, arms folded across his chest, for the next five or six minutes these three players step into the unknown with an entirely unscripted and wholly improvised piece of music. Sounding for all the world like an official composition, as Wetton plays a gently descending arpeggio, Cross' rhapsodic interplay with Fripp's Mellotronic flutes takes flight. Swooping and soaring around the ornate cornices of the main hall, they eventually come to rest on a gentle cadence. In the subsequent applause, each player, including Bruford, who has been silent throughout, exchange a look as if to say, "How did that happen?" Little wonder then that the band decided to include this particular performance on 1974's *Starless And Bible Black* with the suitable title, *Trio*.

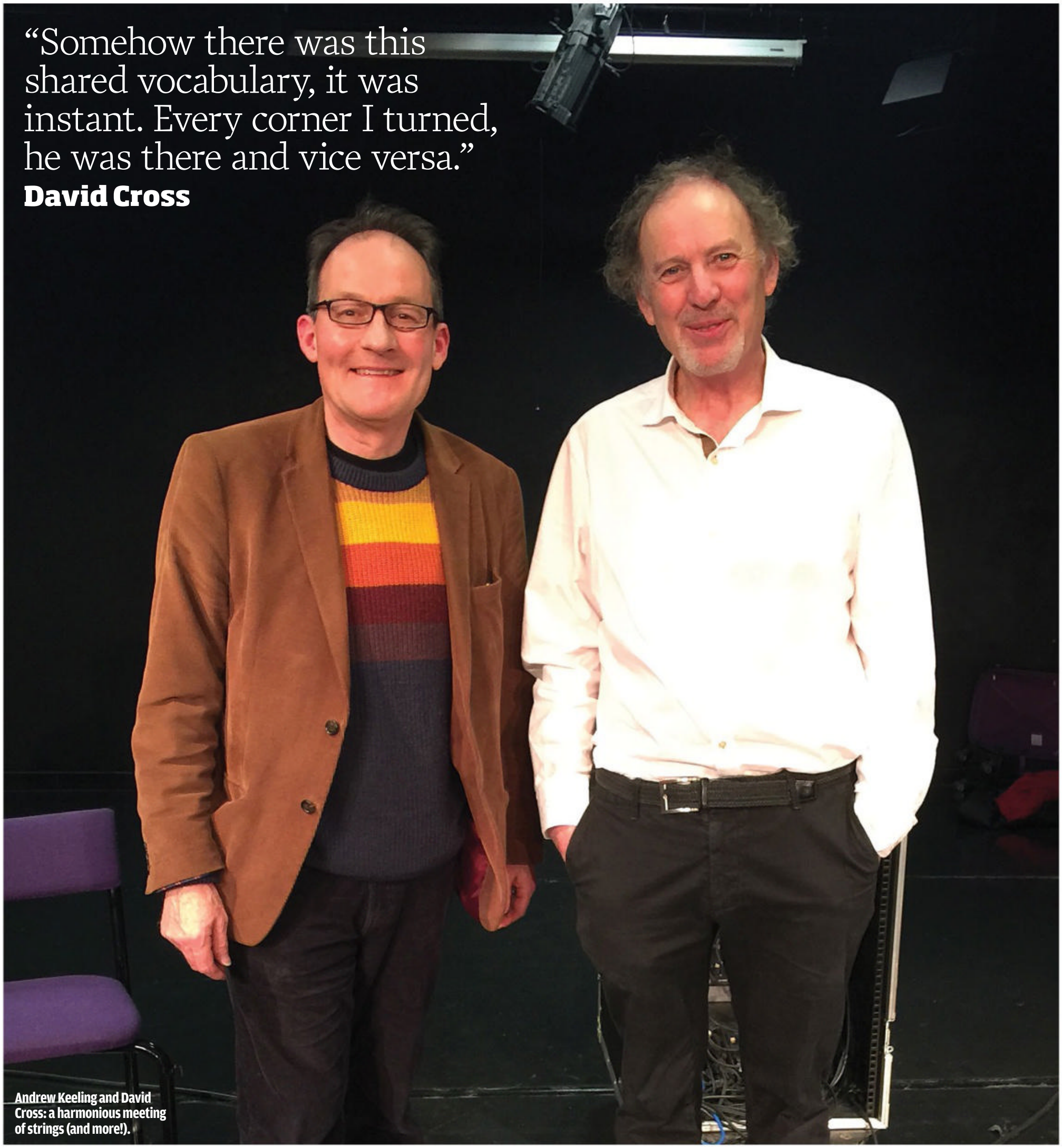
Music has a habit of rippling through time. Like water, it always finds its level. Spool forward a few decades from that night with King Crimson in Amsterdam to the early 2000s and the violinist decided to do an arrangement of *Trio* for the David Cross Band ahead of a Japanese tour. "I'd heard somewhere there had been a transcription of it and got in touch with Robert to see if he knew

Andrew Keeling: "The great thing about Cross and Keeling is that you can play spontaneously."

PRESS/ TEVE PENNINGTON

David Cross: "As soon as we got together there was a kind of magic that came straight away."

PRESS/FOTOGRAF PK



Andrew Keeling and David Cross: a harmonious meeting of strings (and more!).

more about it.” He did and pointed Cross in the direction of composer Andrew Keeling, who had scored the instrumental piece for lute, viol, and Renaissance flute. It had been performed by the classical quartet Virelai on their album, *Sad Steps*.

Cross and Keeling met up in 2008 at the London Metropolitan University, where the former was teaching at the time. An accomplished pianist and guitarist, Keeling opted to play the flute at their very first jam. It was, says Cross, a special moment. “As soon as we got together there was a kind of magic there that came straight away. Somehow there was this shared vocabulary, it was instant. Every corner I turned, he was there and vice versa. There was a real understanding of what the other person was up to, which is really quite rare. I thought we did very well in the version of King Crimson I was in when it came to understanding each other’s improvised foibles. After Crimson I discovered how hard it is to find people that have the same insight and understanding and do share a similar kind of vision. Being able to anticipate where you’re going to go next or just understand, from a tiny gesture where you’re heading and having that affinity with someone is great, and for me, it was very striking that we seemed able to do that.”

One person with whom Cross had previously worked in a wholly improvised context in his post-Crimson career was Japanese pianist and vocalist Naomi Maki. In 2006 they released *Unbounded*, an album of music that veered between Debussy-like interludes, jagged atonal sparing, drones, and Maki’s occasional soprano vocals. Occupying an adventurous space on the contemporary classical spectrum, Cross branded it *Electric Chamber Music Volume One*. It’s a partnership Cross would like to revisit at some point, but at the moment he’s enjoying what might be regarded as an unlikely instrumental pairing with

Keeling with just some of his many strings...

PRESS/ELIZABETH KEELING

Keeling. "The difference in working with Naomi, particularly as a pianist, was that the functions were already delineated. Basically, the piano is the accompanying instrument and the violin plays the tune, so you know what your job is. But with Andrew, with two lead instruments both up there in the higher register, there aren't really any rules about what you do."

Not unlike the late David Bedford, who collaborated with Kevin Ayers, Roy Harper, and Mike Oldfield alongside his classical work, Keeling has never felt the need to 'stay in lane' when it comes to deciding who he wants to work with. Having composed numerous commissions for prestigious groups and performers including BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, percussionist Evelyn Glennie, The Hilliard Ensemble, and others, Keeling has recorded several albums with his alt-rock project Otherworld, which also includes Comsat Angels' Stephen Fellows, and The Gong Farmers in which Keeling duetted on flute with ex-Van der Graaf Generator sax and flute player, David Jackson. A self-confessed King Crimson fan, who first saw the band in 1971, Keeling's the author of several musicological guides on Crimson's studio albums, and in 1999 he scored startling new arrangements of Robert Fripp's soundscapes for orchestra, which were performed in Amsterdam and eventually released in 2012 as *The Wine Of Silence*. "When you write music, particularly long pieces, you spend many, many months putting the nitty-gritty together," observes Keeling. "Something may begin as a sketch and then it's elaborated through subsequent writings and it takes a hell of a long time to pull a piece together and you may only get one performance of that. The great thing about Cross and Keeling is that you can play spontaneously and you play and respond to the other person in the room, in this case David, and something happens."

Their first album together, *English Sun*, released in 2009 and subtitled *Electric Chamber Music Volume Two*, creates a genteel but occasionally pensive landscape. Like King Crimson's *Trio*, there are several moments that give every impression of being fully composed rather than the result of an almost supernatural hair-raising musical telepathy. While those qualities remain central to *October Is Marigold*, the new album is darker in tone and mood. As with *English Sun*, not all the improvisations

> "With this duo, you can't really do a lot to it. Its strength is space and uncluttered texture."
> **Andrew Keeling**

are flute and violin-based. Keeling sometimes deploys keyboards and guitar alongside post-production flute loops, Mellotron, and percussive sounds. However, such embellishments are deliberately kept to a minimum, says Keeling. "With this duo, you can't really do a lot to it. Its strength is space and uncluttered texture."

The album is balanced around the appearance of four motifs, each bearing the title of *Marigold*, that extend and develop with each appearance. Cross' response on the lower register of the electric violin has a yearning, soulful aspect. "It's a little piano sequence from Andrew," explains Cross. "It's a wonderful skill to be able to produce something that's on the one hand very simple but at the same time very weighty. They have a gravitas, a dignity and real depth to them." The album's title track also has Keeling playing a descending church organ part that Cross says was especially moving for him. "It sounds completely harmless but once you step on board with it you're suddenly engaged with something that you didn't know was in you, that you didn't even know was there."

Cross brings some customary soul to the proceedings.

PRESS/EDGAR FRANZ

As a player, Cross says that in responding to such motifs and accompaniments he's sometimes prone to a sense of being transported somewhere else entirely. "Andrew has this great insight into 'early music' and I suddenly feel like, 'Oh gosh, I'm there' when we are playing. It's like time travelling."

October Is Marigold is out now via Electric Chamber Music/Noisy Records. See www.davidcrossband.com for more information.

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Starting Over

Dreams of escapism, lyrics about squabbling spouses, an upcycled poem and the dying cries of a piano are all woven into the patterns of *Two Piece Puzzle*. **Rosalie Cunningham** tells *Prog* about the challenges of creating her kaleidoscopic new album twice over.

Words: David West **Images:** Rob Blackham

"We started recording it once and then I scrapped it all, put it all in the bin and started again," says Rosalie Cunningham. The singer and songwriter's second album as a solo artist, *Two Piece Puzzle*, was created and then recreated by Cunningham and Rosco Wilson (who also goes by the name of Rosco Levee), her partner in both music and life, working together largely in isolation, hence the title. It's a fabulous romp through psychedelia, glam rock and prog that reveals the multifarious talents of Cunningham and Wilson with nods to Cunningham's musical heroes, from Bowie to The Beatles, along the way. "Most of it was done at home and in a very intense, confined environment with my partner, which I haven't really experienced before," says Cunningham about the album's uncooperative gestation. "It had its pros and cons. Because of that whole experience, the record was inspired by that chemistry we have together. We both play multiple instruments, so it was a lot of swapping around and giving each other ideas, and I've never really had anybody be present at all times during my songwriting process, so that certainly had an influence. I'm not quite sure what kind of influence but it was as if I was writing for an audience of one who was just sitting there most of the time. That was quite different."

Writing can be a very private affair as the artist grapples with expressing the images and emotions conjured from the muses, so having someone, even a partner, present demands a certain level of exposure. "You have to just let yourself be that vulnerable," says Cunningham. "Some of the songs are very thinly veiled in terms of being about our relationship, so that was a bit awkward. I had a quite a healthy attitude towards it and, in the end, I just got so used to it, and [Wilson] doesn't get too involved in the lyric writing. He lets me get on with that and doesn't ask too many questions, so that obviously helps."

The writing format often featured Cunningham singing while playing guitar or piano with Wilson on drums. However, tub thumping is not the guitarist and bassist's first calling and that was a stumbling block in their initial attempt at recording. "He's not a drummer, never has played drums in a band or in the studio, but he was getting really good, so we thought, 'Why don't we do everything ourselves instead of getting a drummer in?'" explains Cunningham.

The pair booked a studio for the drum tracks, planning to record everything else themselves. "Obviously in the studio with the pressure and everything under a microscope, things weren't quite as relaxed as they

"Most of it was done at home and in a very intense, confined environment with my partner, which I haven't really experienced before."

Rosalie Cunningham took a DIY approach on her second solo album.

"I'm really looking forward to playing the whole album live and letting it develop."

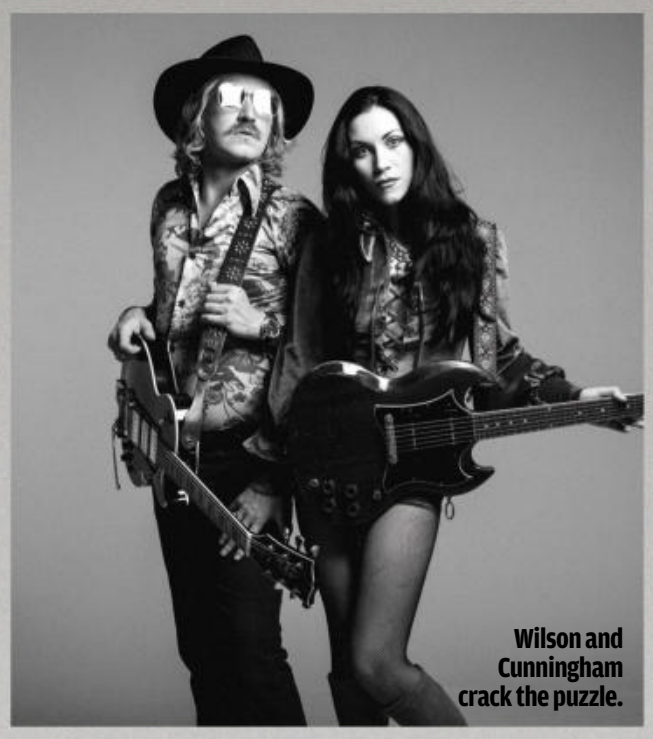
were at home and we weren't happy with the drum takes, so we thought, 'Okay, if we don't have the foundations there, there's no point tracking up, it will be a waste of time. Let's go back to the drawing board.'"

Thus, they started over almost from scratch, although Wilson's drumming made it onto three tracks of the finished product. The flow of songs on *Two Piece Puzzle* is interspersed with two shorter pieces, *The War* and *God Is A Verb*. The former started life as a poem that became a counterpoint to the sound of a piano's final, dying moments. "We recorded some incidental samples when we were taking apart my old piano," explains Cunningham. "We realised we couldn't get it down the stairs, so we had to smash it up in the flat. While we were doing it, it sounded amazing, just this cacophony of echoey string snapping, so we recorded a load of that. I wanted to use it for something, and I had this poem, so I decided to put those two together. *God Is A Verb* is just a little song like *Her Majesty* on the end of *Abbey Road* or something like that; it was just a thing that I had lying around. I'd pick up the guitar every now and then and play that two-minute ditty and I thought, 'Well, why not put it on the album?' There are quite a lot of intense, long tracks and it's nice to have a breath of fresh air with those little interludes."

In contrast to the shorter segues, *Donovan Ellington* and *Donny Pt Two* tell the story of a dissatisfied blacksmith, the titular Donovan, seeking to escape his problems by running away to see the world.

"I absolutely loved doing that, so much so that I feel I'm really not done with that story, and I might just keep writing sequels to it, create some sort of Donovan Ellington World franchise," says Cunningham. "You really don't get a lot of time in a song to get a story across, unless it's a very, very long, wordy, wordy, versey, versey song without many hooks or lead breaks, so that's quite a challenge. I hope it does conjure enough of a world for people."

Donovan's yearning for new horizons feels all too relatable in the age of lockdowns, born from Cunningham's own longing for "escapism and wanting what you can't have and what you don't have. Then I used that character to explain those feelings. He's just basically a guy who keeps running away from his responsibilities seeking out excitement and danger and whatever, but that's just a metaphor for how I was feeling." Both songs, recounting Mr Ellington's escapades, include Fairport Convention's Ric Sanders on violin. Coincidentally, Cunningham purchased an electric violin during lockdown intending to learn a new instrument, although it didn't quite pan out that way. "I just haven't had the motivation," she says. "If I was like, 'Okay, I'm going to give myself the goal of going into the studio in six months' time and putting down a violin part in front of people,' then that might be enough motivation but it's very much 'what's the point' at the moment?"


Wilson and Cunningham crack the puzzle.

Fortunately, Sanders offered his talents, despite never having met Cunningham. "I've only spoken to him over the phone. We know each other through Cropredy Festival. I've been booked but unfortunately haven't had the opportunity to play it because it's been postponed two years in a row. He got in touch out of the blue and said he was really enjoying my music and he'd like to play on it. I was like, 'Wow, of course you can!'"

> "Ric Sanders got in touch out of the blue and said he was really enjoying my music and he'd like to play on it. I was like, 'Wow, of course you can!'"

Duet, as the name implies, sees Wilson and Cunningham trading verses in a song about a couple in conflict. "That's one that we wrote together. That's again kind of a story," says Cunningham. "There's obviously some truth in it but we're playing characters, this role reversal thing of the man is the one at home with the kids and the woman is out there gallivanting, trying to be an actress but just sleeping about. Not that I do that! That's definitely not autobiographical!"

Songs about marital disharmony notwithstanding, the couple's creative processes seem to be distinct but complementary to one another. "He thinks that I'm far too fussy and neurotic about everything," says Cunningham of Wilson. "He's a one-take wonder with a lot of things and even if it's got mistakes in it, he's like, 'Ah, it's rock'n'roll.' That's so not my attitude at all. I wish it was, I wish I could be that cool about it, but I'll re-do it a thousand times and the first one is better than the last one in the end anyway so it's a big waste of time."

One of the temptations during the assembling of *Two Piece Puzzle* was the inclination to keep doing take after take, particularly when Cunningham was working in their home studio and didn't have to worry about being on the clock. "I just think I work better with a deadline," she says. "I can just tinker forever to the point of insanity and it's not really getting anywhere. So, I like to post deadlines, even if they're self-imposed, but I'll only self-impose them if I have a reason to."

The CD version of *Two Piece Puzzle* includes two bonus tracks, *Fossil Song* and *Number 149*, which were originally released as a 7-inch single last year. *Number 149* is named after the house where Cunningham grew up. Rather than an unquiet spirit haunting a house, in this case it seems to be the other way around. "I stayed there until I left home at 16, so all of my childhood memories revolve around that particular building," says Cunningham. "The strange thing is I dream about it in different, distorted formations almost every night. In fact, I did last night. My subconscious seems to inhabit that house and whatever is going on in my dream, there's some part of that house, a room or the corridor, the front door. Wherever I am or whatever I'm doing in the dream seems to have some sort of quality of that building, which I find quite interesting."

The next step in the evolution of Cunningham's latest opus will be to take the songs on tour and see how they flourish before the footlights. Cunningham had a run of UK dates in September and October 2021, which gave her the first chance to test out some of the new material live with her six-piece band. It was, she says, "completely different and made me wish that I'd done the album in that way, because as nice as it was to have the really intimate experience that we did have creating it, the songs completely exploded when we played them with six people. They're all very accomplished musicians that had their own takes on my parts and that massively breathed a whole new life into it, so I'm really looking forward to playing the whole album with them and letting it develop."

Thus, the final piece that completes the puzzle will be a live album. "Hopefully, if lockdown doesn't stop us, we're going to do a live recording straight to tape. The idea is to do it at a 200-capacity church, with a proper old-school lightshow, all the fresh new songs, recorded then and there to tape. That's the plan." This begs the question of whether the set would require sacrificing a piano, as Cunningham is keen to include the album's stranger moments like *God Is A Verb* and *The War*. "We've not tried it yet so I can't make any promises about that, but I'd like to," she says. "I think you could do so much with that because it's just a soundscape of experimental noise really, with six of us we could just go around banging things."

Two Piece Puzzle is out now via Esoteric. See www.rosaliecunningham.com for more.

WILDERNESS YEARS

"The 'Blue Forest' idea has to do with something we feel we're about to lose, or have lost already. It's not an actual forest, but also, it kind of is."

Von Hertzen Brothers used the enforced solitude of the last two years to work on their grand and poignant eighth album, which might just be their masterpiece. Mikko Von Hertzen reveals how the Finns raised their *Red Alert In The Blue Forest*.

Words: Grant Moon **Images:** Rami Mursula

For more than two decades Mikko Von Hertzen has spent part of the year at his apartment in Kerala, on the southwest coast of India. When the pandemic kicked off in 2020, most commercial airlines were grounded, and he was stranded. His usual seven-week stay turned into five months, so he wiled away the time writing songs.

Meanwhile, back in the Von Hertzens' native Finland, his elder brother Kie did some hardcore social distancing of his own. He threw his acoustic guitar into his canoe and paddled over to the island of Söderskär in the Finnish Gulf, south of Helsinki. There he camped out, took stock of things, and also wrote.

"When you're in that mindset," Mikko tells *Prog*, "and in that space, you don't feel like writing rock songs. The mood around you dictates the energy of what you want to write. And the energy is very different with this album. Because of the pandemic, we had time to go deeper into the songs. We've done some really punchy rock records, but this one's more introspective. It's a different level, but I'm not sure if it's a good or a bad thing! It's good, I hope."

In fact, it's a great thing. Their eighth LP, *Red Alert In The Blue Forest* could well be their masterpiece. The rock and pop smarts that sealed their reputation across Europe are here, but there's a new, more expansive and – yes – progressive feel to this double album. There's even more complexity in the writing, extra attention to the arrangements and a broadened palette of instrumental colours. Previous strutting albums like *Nine Lives, New Day Rising*, and their last release, 2017's *War Is Over*, are good records. But this feels like one for the ages.

And age itself seems to be a factor in its success. Bassist Jonne turns 45 in April, but Kie's currently 51 and Mikko's catching him up – he'll be 50 this August. "What I love about songwriting," he says, "is finding the *exact* words you want to say, and I think we're getting better at that. We're finding our true voice in a way, which is kind of funny, because this is our eighth album. But also, the older you get the more you realise that what you're going to leave behind is your art, and it does actually matter what you put out there. And we want it to be as good as we can make it."

With this maturity they're in a good position to consider 21st-century life. Perhaps all of us feel that recently the world has sped up, moved into a new, ineffable phase, and not necessarily for the better. From its rather on-the-nose title in, *Red Alert In The Blue Forest* reflects on this.

Von Hertzen Brothers: Kie, Jonne and Mikko.

"The world's different even from six years ago, when we started writing the previous album," says Mikko. "The 'Blue Forest' idea has to do with something we feel we're about to lose, or have lost already. It's not an actual forest, but it kind of is. Our family has a cottage in the country in Raseborg where we used to play when we were kids. Nearby the trees have been cut down and there are species of birds we used to see that have now disappeared. Also there were some changes in our relationship statuses, a lot of letting go and cries for help, in a way. The album deals a lot with us getting older, and losing some of what was precious to us."

Another factor has been the hysterical pitch of modern social discourse, notably in politics and in our interactions online. "The whole thing has become a shouting competition," Mikko explains. "It's really bothersome and energy-consuming. Our communication now is so hostile, and that affected this album. *War Is Over* was a very strong album with a conquering energy, but we wanted this one to be softer, calm, to ask people to stop, listen and not shout."

There are so many reasons to do that and lean into this record. With its Crosby, Stills & Nash-level harmonies, sci-fi opener *Day Of Reckoning* posits a scorched Earth where extra-terrestrial interventionists descend on us to sort out our mess ('*Tales of ancient prophecies from across the galaxies, they can secretly infiltrate our memories*'). This rocker is, Mikko says, "a dystopian song. The bridge part is just like raging fire, storm winds devouring everything around. Everybody's talking about the climate, and how extreme conditions are becoming more frequent. It deals with that. The balance, the harmony of the planet is gone and this is what happens after it's completely disappeared. There's a reckoning — somebody from outside comes in and says, 'Okay, Humanity, you fucked it up!' and they take over."

The highly atmospheric piece *The Promise* has a tribal beat and the strains of guest player Pekko Käppi's jouhikko, a violin-like, three-stringed traditional Swedish/Finnish instrument. Also here is a halldorophone — a cello-like instrument designed to create feedback-soaked drone effects. This adds to the pagan, Finnish folk flavour imbuing parts of the album, adding a timeless, Scandi-organic feel.

The ballad and first single *All Of A Sudden, You're Gone* is beautifully detailed with pianos, cello, violins and brass. The video was shot at a spookily picturesque derelict chalk factory just outside Helsinki, and sees living people put in coffins, mourned by loved ones, then brought out again. "Writing the lyrics," Mikko says, "I was asking if we can ever truly prepare ourselves for loss. Are we ever ready when it actually happens? It could be the end of summer, or the end of a relationship, or it could be end of life."

The playful *Pirates Of The Raseborgian* harks back to the brothers' childhood playing pirates at that family cottage, but elsewhere some seriously proggy moments elevate the work. The 10-minute *Peace Patrol* features a Floyd-epic solo from guest saxophonist Markus Pajakkala, followed by an inspired, one-take guitar improvisation from Kie that ranks among his finest. *Elbowed* is a symphonic piece about resilience ('*The further I fall from grace, the more I learn to bend and not break*'), with a bold, brassy riff that nods to King Crimson, and huge vocal harmonies channelling Queen or Yes.

But the jewel in the crown has to be the grand, cosmic *Northern Lights*. Notable for including crackling sounds generated by the Aurora Borealis itself, more striking still is the way the band — and the album's executive producer James Spectrum — take what is essentially a song with just four chords, and spread it out into an engrossing, genuinely thrilling seven-minute arrangement. It's a Roger Waters-like masterclass in when to say 'when', in how to use dynamics to gradually build a breathtaking piece of music.

"It's a long buildup," agrees Mikko, "and to keep that interesting is a task, but I think we did it really well. There's a drop that finally comes at the very end — we kept a slice of bottom-end frequency unused until then, so when it hits, it's just goosebumps. With the Northern Lights you get some flares, then unexpectedly it just rolls over the

Seeing red: the brothers have created a different energy on the new LP.

whole sky. It's so beautiful, and that's the effect we tried to capture with the music. James worked for months on that mix to get it perfect."

The brothers' trust in Spectrum is instructive. For a band that's been a pretty self-contained unit in the past *Red Alert In The Blue Forest* benefits from their decision to draft in many other artists. Along with regular drummer Sami Kuoppamäki, keyboardist Robert Engstrand and the numerous string and brass players, they also used four mixing engineers to obtain all the sound elements required. One of the talents they called upon was Samuli Kosminen, a Finnish percussionist who's worked with Sigur Rós vocalist Jónsi, and composed for beloved Finnish animation *The Moomins*. His work adds extra depth to the acoustic lament *Söderskär*, sung tenderly by Kie, who wrote it on the titular island on one of his canoe trips. "He had some experience there with his ex-wife," Mikko reveals, "and he wanted to put that emotion into a song."

The album hangs together up to the very last chord, which itself has an interesting story. The intimate closing song *Disappear There* features a pump organ — a big German unit built in the 1800s and located in a Finnish church. A friend of the band played the parts, and also added lines using the church's main organ. "For the very last chord," Mikko remembers, "he kept his hand on the keys, then our producer turned the organ off, and the sound died in a very cool way, just kind of wound down and out. That song was definitely about death. It was written to say, 'Okay, that was it — I'm out of here!' But I wanted it to be beautiful, not too depressing. It's just that realisation that everybody has to go and maybe, you know, that was my time."

The band will support the album release with shows in Finland in the spring, with European dates planned and a UK tour in May. In another classy move, they've commissioned 11 pieces of art, one for each song on the album, and these will be exhibited from March and then sold via online auction. All funds raised will go towards buying an actual forest in southern Finland, which will be part of an ongoing preservation project.

A special product of our strange times, *Red Alert In The Blue Forest* is freighted with meaning and musical expertise, and deserves to take the Von Hertzen Brothers to the next level of acclaim. They've done well since forming in 2000, building up a solid back catalogue (including three No.1 albums in Finland), touring widely and accruing a loyal fanbase across the world. But on paper, on record and on stage, they have all the components to be a much bigger band than they actually are, especially now.

So, why aren't the Von Hertzen Brothers *massive*?

Mikko thinks for a while. "It's a good question. I do think it's really hard for people to sell our band. We're not rock, we're not prog, we're not folk, but we are *all* of those things. So it's a difficult situation, commercial-wise, to pigeonhole us. We're in that weird area of not being anything but ourselves. There's no other band like Von Hertzen Brothers, and I say that with a little pride. But at the same time, that's one of the things that prevents us becoming bigger.

"We've realised that we just do the songs we love, put everything we have into them, and there will be people who like them, and others who won't get it at all. And that's life, you know?"

Red Alert In The Blue Forest is out on March 18 via Doing Being Music. See www.vonhertzenbrothers.com for more.

"We're finding our true voice in a way, which is kind of funny, because this is our eighth album."

All Change!

For the last 12-plus months, **Black Country, New Road** have enjoyed the sort of acclaim many young bands could only dream of. But, in the days before they released their second album, their lead vocalist, Isaac Wood, announced he was quitting. Sax player Lewis Evans and drummer Charlie Wayne talk to *Prog* about creating *Ants From Up There* and why they've decided to carry on as a sextet.

Words: Rob Hughes **Images:** Rosie Foster

Charlie Wayne still has a voice memo on his phone from summer 2018. The drummer and his bandmates in the newly formed Black Country, New Road had just hit on an interesting musical motif at rehearsals. "It just grew and grew and became more distorted," he explains. "Then about a year later we started writing what would become *Basketball Shoes*. It just came from a lot of different composite parts brought together. By the beginning of 2020 we were playing it properly as a band. It always felt like the sum total of everything the group had been moving towards for a while."

At 12-and-a-half minutes long, the magnificent *Basketball Shoes* now forms the anchor of Black Country, New Road's latest album, *Ants From Up There*. Released exactly a year after their exhilarating debut, *For The First Time*, it caps 12 months of accelerated popular acclaim. They've been routinely lauded by critics as Britain's brightest young things, crashed into the Top 5 of the UK album charts and been nominated for the Mercury Prize.

Much of Black Country, New Road's appeal lies in their lack of easy classification. Their songs are restlessly inventive and often deeply experimental, yet tend to be grounded in the kind of melodies that stick. For every abrasive echo of Slint, early Roxy Music, Gentle Giant or the free-blowing Canterbury scene, there's also a love of great contemporary pop. Somehow they manage to pull off that rare trick of being both challenging and accessible.

"Arcade Fire were a big inspiration for *Ants From Up There*," says saxophonist and flautist Lewis Evans. "Their *Funeral* album is definitely within the sound of it. At the same time, Isaac [Wood, ex-vocals and guitar] and Luke [Mark, guitar] were listening to a load of 60s and 70s pop music — Harry Nilsson and those kind of guys — while writing their parts. So that comes through in the harmony of a lot of the songs." Adds Wayne: "All seven of us [were] writing our own parts and that's what makes it work, to some extent. We're able to bring those individual tastes to create something composite, which I think is where a lot of the exciting stuff happens."

The band are also partial to a concept idea. "I love song cycles," Evans enthuses. "There's a really strong musical motif within *Basketball Shoes* that recurs throughout the whole album. We wanted it to feel like a unified project, this one big piece of art. And that was the best way to connect it all. It's just such a cool melodic shape too, one that feels familiar but is also not that common.

"Apart from making a perfect album in our eyes, we wanted it to be more appealing to a larger group of people without losing integrity," he continues. "Zoomed out, this music is extremely listenable. You'll find something to enjoy in every song, no matter what music you like. But when you zoom in, it's such a meticulous record. Every single moment is so detailed, whether that's involving a lot of things or not that much. It's a case of making sure every single decision is exactly what is needed. So you get a good sense of experimentation within the boundaries of easy-on-the-ears western harmony and rhythm, using the tools we have, as indie, middle-class white kids."

Black Country, New Road formed in Cambridge in 2018. Evans, Wayne and Wood — alongside bassist Tyler Hyde, Georgia Ellery (violin/cello/mandolin) and May Kershaw (keyboards/marimba) — had all previously played together in local avant-garde group Nervous Conditions. After one album, which remains unreleased, they split and regrouped as Black Country, New Road. The sextet moved to London and grew to a seven-piece in 2019 with the addition of Luke Mark, who arrived just prior to the recording of their second single, *Sunglasses*.

At the back end of 2020, the band were snapped up by Ninja Tune, who quickly made plans to release *For The First Time*. By the time the album landed the following February, however, Black Country, New Road were already busy writing *Ants From Up There*. "Basically, the first album was a wonderful representation of where the group was in 2018-19," says Wayne. "So when it came out at the start of 2021, some of those songs were two or three years old. It's the sound of the band coming together, finding what we liked and

"I love song cycles. There's a really strong musical motif within *Basketball Shoes* that recurs throughout the whole album. We wanted it to feel like a unified project, this one big piece of art."
Lewis Evans

Black Country, New Road (pictured with former vocalist Isaac Wood) are taking a new route.

what sounded cool. And also writing music that we thought would be kind of shocking for people to hear, quite abrasive in its way. It wasn't necessarily a crystal clear reflection of where the band was in 2021."

Ants From Up There feels like a more assured statement. There's also much more space in the arrangements, as if they've finally realised the true value of allowing the songs to breathe. It transpires that being in extended periods of lockdown was not without its advantages. "Lots of this music was made while we couldn't do any gigging, which meant that we had a lot more space," offers Evans. "You're not looking for that instant reaction from the crowd like you do when you're developing music [while] playing live. So it meant that we could look more broadly at the compositions and allow ourselves to give them more time to develop."

This is evident everywhere on *Ants From Up There*, from the semi-symphonic sprawl of *The Place Where He Inserted The Blade* to the skronk rocking *Good Will Hunting*, from the mournful jazz of *Mark's Theme* to the aforementioned *Basketball Shoes*, which sounds like a post-rock Fairport. The band's playful eclecticism is mirrored by Wood's lyrical shifts. He also uses recurring phrases and themes — often droll, sometimes vulnerable, always intriguing — that may or may not be autobiographical.

Now comes the twist. Less than 72 hours after *Prog*'s call — and with the release of *Ants From Up There* just four days away — Wood announced he was leaving the band. His statement explained that he'd been struggling with his mental health. It was clear it had been a very difficult decision, as he paid tribute to "six of the greatest people I know, who were and are wonderful in a sparkling way."

The band's imminent US tour was promptly postponed. And when they return to the live circuit, Black Country, New Road won't be playing any music from their two studio albums, out of respect for Wood. Tyler Hyde, meanwhile, will take over as lead vocalist.

The other members of Black Country, New Road had known of Wood's exit for some time. Speaking to *Prog* again a few days later, Wayne points out "it was super-important for Isaac to be able to announce his departure on his own terms. It just wouldn't have been right to talk about it publicly before then."

"It was super-important for Isaac to be able to announce his departure on his own terms. It just wouldn't have been right to talk about it publicly before then."
Charlie Wayne

Previously, the only hint that there may be changes afoot was when Lewis had mentioned that, going forward, they were planning to mix up the singing and pass the baton a little more. "It's ironic, because we'd spoken a huge amount about democratising the vocals for whatever project we moved onto next," says Wayne. "The band is full of talented lyricists and vocalists, so it had long been the plan to shake things up a bit."

As for the future, Black Country, New Road are concentrating on their strengths. "I think we're all focusing on doing what we've always done best: playing music together," Wayne says. "We're writing every week and seeing one another all the time. It's been a stressful period, but we're a pretty resilient group. We're all ridiculously proud of everything we've done together over the last few years. I consider myself to be one of the luckiest people in the world to be able to make music with my closest friends and call it a job."

Ants From Up There is out now via Ninja Tune. See www.blackcountrynewroad.com for more.

L-R: Isaac Wood, Georgia Ellery, Lewis Evans, May Kershaw, Tyler Hyde, Luke Mark, Charlie Wayne.

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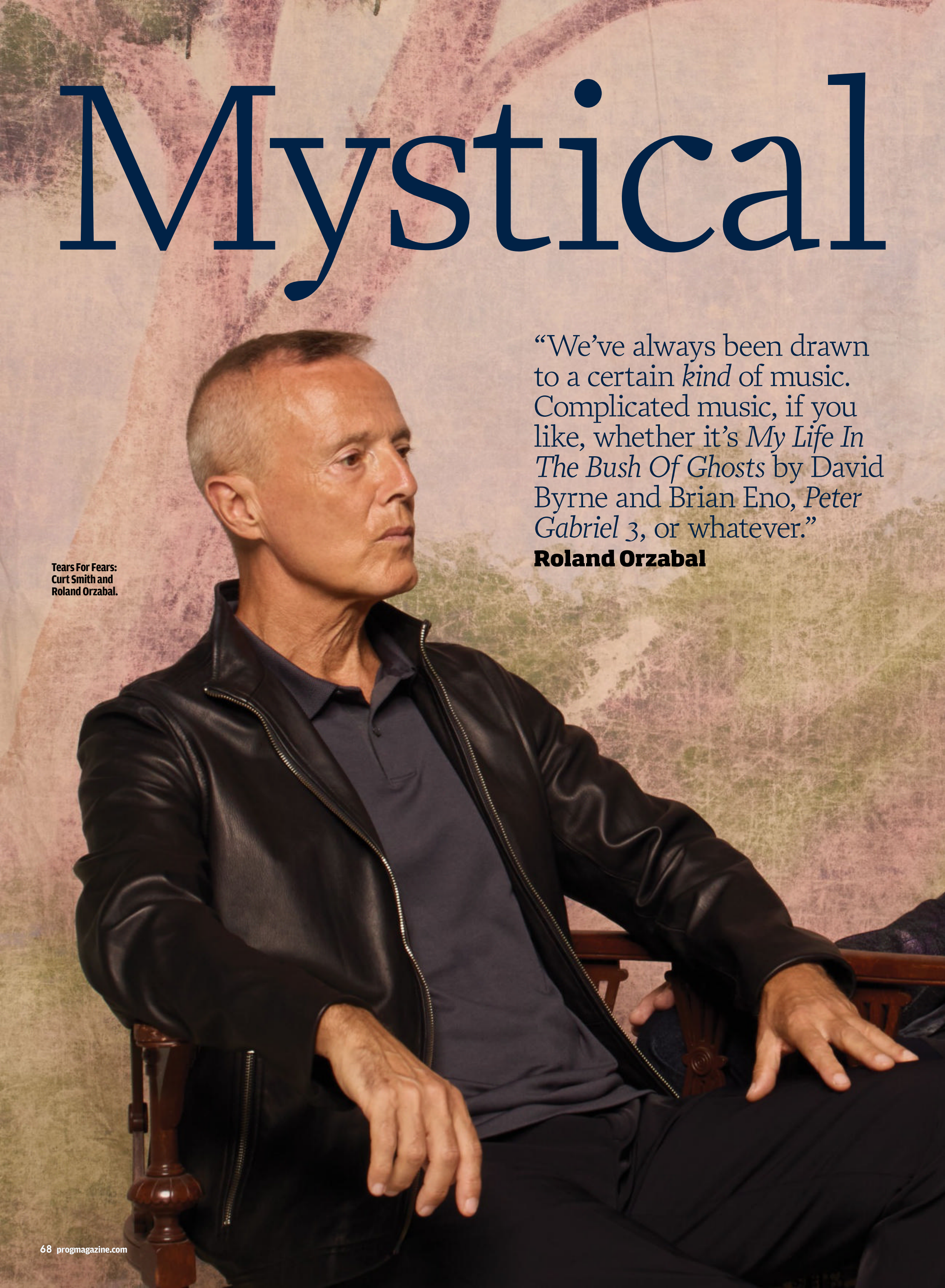

Tears For Fears: Curt Smith and Roland Orzabal.

"We've always been drawn to a certain *kind* of music. Complicated music, if you like, whether it's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* by David Byrne and Brian Eno, *Peter Gabriel 3*, or whatever."

Roland Orzabal

Purpose

Once darlings of the 80s pop scene, **Tears For Fears** have made a bold return with their first new album since 2004's *Everybody Loves A Happy Ending*. *The Tipping Point* finds the duo embarking on a united quest to strike musical gold via a more experimental path. Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith discuss how their reunion led to them rediscovering themselves.

Words: Rob Hughes **Images:** Frank W Ockenfels

Curt Smith has a framed picture of King Crimson on his bathroom wall. It's not just any old photo. The occasion is April 30, 1981, in the confines of Bath's Moles club, where a fresh iteration of the band – tentatively called Discipline – is returning to the live stage for the first time in seven years. Bassist Tony Levin dominates the foreground, while the 19-year-old Smith stands directly in front of him, utterly transfixed.

"A friend of mine got Tony Levin to send that picture to me," explains Smith, who went on to form Tears For Fears with Roland Orzabal later in '81. "Apparently, Tony used to have this side-stage camera that he'd take pictures with during a gig, using a footswitch. So it's taken from slightly behind him, with me looking at him playing a Chapman stick. In the picture I'm like, 'What *is* that?'"

To the uninitiated, it may come as a surprise to discover that Tears For Fears are big prog fans. After all, they became synonymous with the new breed of British synthpop with 1983 debut, *The Hurting*, before conquering the rest of the 80s with platinum-selling monsters *Songs From The Big Chair* and *The Seeds Of Love*. But there was always something much deeper going on.

The Hurting was a concept album about childhood dysfunction and trauma, with allusions to Arthur Janov's primal scream therapy. Dark themes cloaked in mainstream pop. The title track was an inventive mini-suite, while songs like *Memories Fade* boasted the forceful complexity of the best prog. Even King Crimson veteran Mel Collins popped up on sax.

And while 1985's *Songs From The Big Chair* yielded the mega-hits *Shout* and *Everybody Wants To Rule The World*, its sense of ambition was far more attuned to the world of prog. There's a clear King Crimson feel to the knotty precision of *Broken*; the fragile *I Believe*

betrays the influence of Robert Wyatt (to whom it's dedicated); and *Listen* is nearly seven minutes of gorgeous futurist abstraction.

By the time they returned with *The Seeds Of Love* in 1989, Tears For Fears had assimilated prog, pop, jazz and post-psychedelia into a richly organic vision, the questing spirit of late-60s rock dressed in late-80s luxuriance. Even the guests — Phil Collins, Simon Clark, Jon Hassell and Simon Phillips among them — had serious prog credentials.

"We've always been drawn to a certain *kind* of music," says Orzabal. "Complicated music, if you like, whether it's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* by David Byrne and Brian Eno, *Peter Gabriel 3* [aka *Melt*], or whatever. In the days when everyone would go to school with the name of a band on their rucksacks, mine was Uriah Heep. I was absolutely obsessed with them. And then *Foxtrot* and *Genesis Live*. And Led Zeppelin's *Houses Of The Holy*."

"I was always more of a Peter Gabriel fan than Genesis," adds Smith. "Renaissance was another one: *Scheherazade And Other Stories*. When I look back at the albums I listened to, they were all very lyrically intense and musically a little weird. Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* and *Animals* were two albums that I *loved*. *Wish You Were Here*, particularly, was just so daring and different. Floyd were a huge influence for me."

Back then, as teenagers in Bath, school friends Smith and Orzabal were inspired to form a band of their own. Mod-leaning quintet Graduate were duly founded in 1978, but ground to a halt three years later, after a solitary album that didn't sell. Undeterred, Smith and Orzabal pressed ahead as a duo.

"Curt and I were almost like students, trying to get to that fucking level of the music we really loved," Orzabal recalls. "But you never can, it's always slightly out of reach. My God, you can have a lot of fun trying to get there, though. So we had that sort of united quest for the gold bars coming out of the speakers."

Adds Smith, "We listened intently to other records. We knew we could never be that good, but at least we could aspire to get closer. I think we'll always be in a position where we feel like that. And I think that's a good place to be in, because then you continue to strive."

Intriguingly, Tears For Fears returned to their teenage selves to kickstart their new album. *The Tipping Point*, their first for 18 years, had a troubled and lengthy gestation. Their management team had initially suggested that Smith and Orzabal write and produce with younger artists in order to snag a more commercial, more youthful demographic. What the duo now dismissively refer to as "speed dating" was a failure, the upshot being a set of recordings devoid of Tears For Fears' core identity. Not for the first time in their career, it also led to tension between Smith and Orzabal.

They decided to change management, scrap the collaborative album and switch labels. Just before the pandemic hit, the pair got together in Smith's adopted city of Los Angeles for a crisis meeting. "When we'd come off the last tour in 2019, I'd gone into my

"When I look back at the albums I listened to, they were all very lyrically intense and musically a little weird. Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* and *Animals* were two albums that I *loved*."
Curt Smith

Orzabal and Smith: embracing their new era.

second rehab and Curt had gone off into the sunset," Orzabal explains. "We tend to be at loggerheads when we go on tour a lot, because touring is very stressful. And like a marriage, if something goes wrong, you immediately blame your partner. So we went out for lunch in early 2020 and sort of reconnected. Then we got together in Curt's house with a couple of acoustic guitars.

"It was the first time we'd really done that since we were about 18," he continues. "And I became aware, probably from sobering up, that something occurs between the two of us, like a third force. And that third presence is very creative. Curt had a riff and we came up with a piece of music that was really unusual. Then I took it away and just ramped the whole thing up."

The result was *No Small Thing*, the opening track on *The Tipping Point*. Smith takes up the story: "Roland went back to England after that writing session and sent me this song that was just completely different. It went from an acoustic guitar thing into this grandiose track. And I was like, 'Yes, *that's* what we do!' Initially, I was wondering whether this project was ever going to work or not. But that song led us on the way. That was the point where I realised we could make this record."

The Tipping Point is a majestic and fittingly mature work. Prog-pop songs soar, borne up by strings. Acoustic hymns glow amid layers of quivering synths, while guitars churn and ballads stir. It's also deeply affecting. Tears For Fears have been through a lot to get here, particularly Orzabal. The album is heavily informed by grief, loss, mental anguish and healing, among other things. Some of its most moving moments — the title track and *Please Be Happy* — were written about Caroline, Orzabal's wife of 35 years, who died in 2017.

"What *is* that?" Curt watches Tony Levin when Discipline, aka King Crimson, opened their tour in Bristol in 1981.

TONY LEVIN COURTESY OF DGM

Already on medication for depression, the onset of alcohol-related dementia meant that Orzabal spent five years as her prime carer.

Orzabal is candid when it comes to talking about *Please Be Happy*. "That song is really about clinical depression, where the person you love can't get off the sofa," he reveals. "They don't want to go out for a meal. In fact, they don't actually want to eat. With Caroline, her depression and anxiety was off the scale. Like *The Tipping Point*, it came from a long period of time. We're talking many, many years of decline. I wrote more songs about that whole scenario, but those were the two that made it onto the album."

As alluded to earlier, he developed his own related problems at the same time. "I was also in the grip of addiction," says Orzabal. "And my first instinct was denial. We were on tour in the States when Caroline passed away. I flew back, arranged the funeral, did the wake, got back on a plane and continued with the tour. Even towards the end of that year, we were still working. It was only when we stopped that the wheels came off for me. My first Christmas without her, at our family home with our sons, I was absolutely done in. And then I had my own health issues, where I ended up in hospital four times. I ended up on the same fucking psychoactive drugs as she did. So I know exactly what happens if you drink with them and suddenly stop. Thankfully, I had the support and wisdom to put myself into rehab. Caroline tried so many times, but she just couldn't do it."

Despite the profoundly personal nature of parts of *The Tipping Point*, the songs also work on a universal level. Smith and Orzabal examine love, devotion, loss, sorrow and redemption throughout. Anger and compassion too. The ruling patriarchy is lambasted on *Break The Man*, while the sublime *Rivers Of Mercy* addresses Black Lives Matter and societal unrest. "We care a lot about what's going on in the world," Orzabal offers. "Especially in this day and age, where the myths we're being sold by governments are so powerful. Within that, someone's got to step forward and start speaking about the reality. That's what we're trying to do. Not libertarian, but more sort of social commentary."

The Tipping Point is way better than anyone might have expected from two 60-year-old men who've been together (and fallen out on various occasions) since they were kids. Tears For Fears have their own unique, sometimes combustible chemistry. And an intensity and sense of adventurism that continues to align Smith and Orzabal to the artists they adored in their formative years.

With a stack of live dates coming up in 2022, pandemic willing, Tears For Fears are in a very good moment right now. Past experience, however, has taught them not to get too far ahead of themselves. "Going on tour will be step one," says Smith. "If there's a step two, that will either present itself or not. Roland and I are old enough and wise enough to realise that. Anytime we make plans further ahead, they tend to never materialise."

Orzabal, meanwhile, seems to be reawakened. "At the end of 2019, I had kind of a shift, personally and emotionally," he concludes. "Partly being with my new wife [writer and photographer Emily Rath] and being in a far better place, mentally. And I had a sense that there was something important that Curt and I had to do. A sense of mystical purpose, if you like, to ring in a new era for Tears For Fears. And for us as people who've known each other since the age of 14. To turn 60 together, and to be still working together, is really something. This has been a bit of a dream, to be honest."

The Tipping Point is out now via Concord. See www.tearsforfears.com for more information.

We see good things on the horizon for Azure!

Out Of The Blue

Prog readers voted Brighton-based **Azure** 2021's Best Unsigned Band in our annual readers' poll. Originally created as a university project, Azure have now taken the plunge into the great unknown. Founders Christopher Sampson and Galen Stapley tell us how fantasy and art help them imagine their epic musical stories.

Words: Alison Reijman
Image: Felix La Mer

A mutual love of Dream Theater brought together Azure's Christopher Sampson and Galen Stapley early on during their music degree course at the University Of Sussex. Eight years later, they're astonished to find Azure voted *Prog*'s Best Unsigned Band. "I still can't believe it!" exclaims guitarist Stapley. "We put up a post on Facebook to see if we could do anything. Everyone was so sweet and voted for us! I knew we had a few fans out there but not enough to help us win the poll."

This accolade rounded off an action-packed 2021, which saw the release of their second album, *Of Brine And Angel's Beaks*, a story involving a fantastical sailor-rescuing bird, and *Mistress*, the glass-shattering high-voltage single. Three gigs also introduced audiences to Azure's dynamic live show, highlighting the octave-defying gymnastics of Sampson's voice and Stapley's intricate, cultured guitar work, augmented by three new bandmembers in what they hope will be a permanent line-up.

Current album, *Of Brine And Angel's Beaks*, is out now!

"Everyone was so sweet and voted for us! I knew we had a few fans out there but not enough to help us win the poll."
Galen Stapley

Prog metal and 80s synthpop are among the myriad influences informing their art fantasy-inspired compositions. Recalls Stapley, "In our very first music business class, I saw Chris had a Dream Theater rucksack and I thought, 'Wow! Here's someone else who loves Dream Theater,' so we started talking. I went over to Chris' flat — and we started making music."

Sampson takes up the story. "When I came to Brighton, I got into this weird tunnel vision when I was playing stuff, recording it, focusing on songs as a whole. I thought the guitar

Azure combine their love of video games and fantasy books to make high-art prog.

stuff I was doing was good, but when I met Galen, I thought, 'Oh my God, I can focus on other stuff because they can play stuff I can't!'"

"Before I met Chris, I did not really know how music was recorded," Stapley admits. "There were certain aspects of my playing that I did not really develop so I practised and practised as that was the bar I had to hit. When I found Chris was making this music, including an EP with two 30-minute songs, I thought, 'Wait, this is how it is done.'

"It completely changed my idea of how everything works and shifted my focus on developing myself creatively. Chris' playing style is more carefree and less meticulous. Seeing how that works inspired me so we take a lot from each other in that sense."

Their debut EP, *(Dream Of) Azure*, was released in 2015. Then came their first album, *Wish For Spring*, in 2017 followed a year later by the EP *Redtail*, which contains the 20-minute cinematic eponymous track, a cornerstone of their live shows. However, the pair faced a musical dilemma during this period of concentrated creativity.

"We'd spent a few years playing in a rock band called Experience. Once the contracts were on the table, it was basically a choice of them or Azure. They wanted to own everything we did and have a say on what we could and couldn't release," explains Stapley. "And we were happy to sell our souls except for that part. They would not budge on a single clause, so we said, 'We're so sorry.' We released *Redtail*, which we had completed by then, and tried to make this band happen, prioritising Azure as we wanted to do our own thing.

"It was a big decision to choose between music we were passionate about and signing the contract, fast-tracking us towards building a corporate rock band."

With Azure back on track, their partnership strengthened through a mutual approach to their multifaceted music. "We slowly converged when we realised our common interests and things we were most passionate about were the same," says Sampson. "For example, some people writing music or lyrics can channel their emotions when they specifically talk about themselves.

"Galen and I have realised the best vehicle for communicating our emotions is through the medium of stories, imagery and fantasy."
Christopher Sampson

"Galen and I have realised the absolute best vehicle for communicating our emotions is through the medium of stories, imagery and fantasy. This is because when you have played a lot of video games, read books and consumed many really cool stories, you get the knack of explaining your feelings through those as opposed to real-life situations. This all slowly took form in our universe."

In tandem with the music, Sampson completed a fantasy novel, for which a publisher is sought. It includes the songs from *Of Brine And Angel's Beaks*, also Sampson's strange symbols and new vocabulary to further enhance the fantasy theme. Joining them for the next chapter in this Azurian universe are drummer Sol Sinclair, keyboard player Shaz Dudhia and bassist Alex Miles. All three musicians played with Azure at last year's Prog For Peart Festival in Abingdon in Oxfordshire, supporting Solstice in Southampton and then in London for Novena's (Re) Launch Show.

"Sol caught me throat singing in the common room back in 2014, showed me a different style of doing it and we became friends," says Sampson with a laugh as the vocalist recalls their early meeting.

The new members are an integral part of the third album, which is now under way. But as Stapley says, theirs is "demanding music in two ways. There's the technical progressive metal aspect, which you really have to practise. There's also the pop-rock, more melodic old-school prog stuff."

"It's really hard to find people who can do both as they are usually busy doing other things," admits Sampson. "You've got to believe in this project as the way Galen and I see it is so important to us. The fantasy and aesthetic of the whole thing is unique to us. Thankfully, that's why we now have this line-up as not only are these guys exceptional musicians, they also really get it and contribute to it."

No date has been set yet for the album's release. "It is such an involved thing. We've been chipping away and when we get time, we can really focus on and progress it," adds Sampson. "We're really excited about it — but we can't give too much away at the moment."

Of Brine And Angel's Beaks is out now via Bandcamp. See www.facebook.com/azuresongs.

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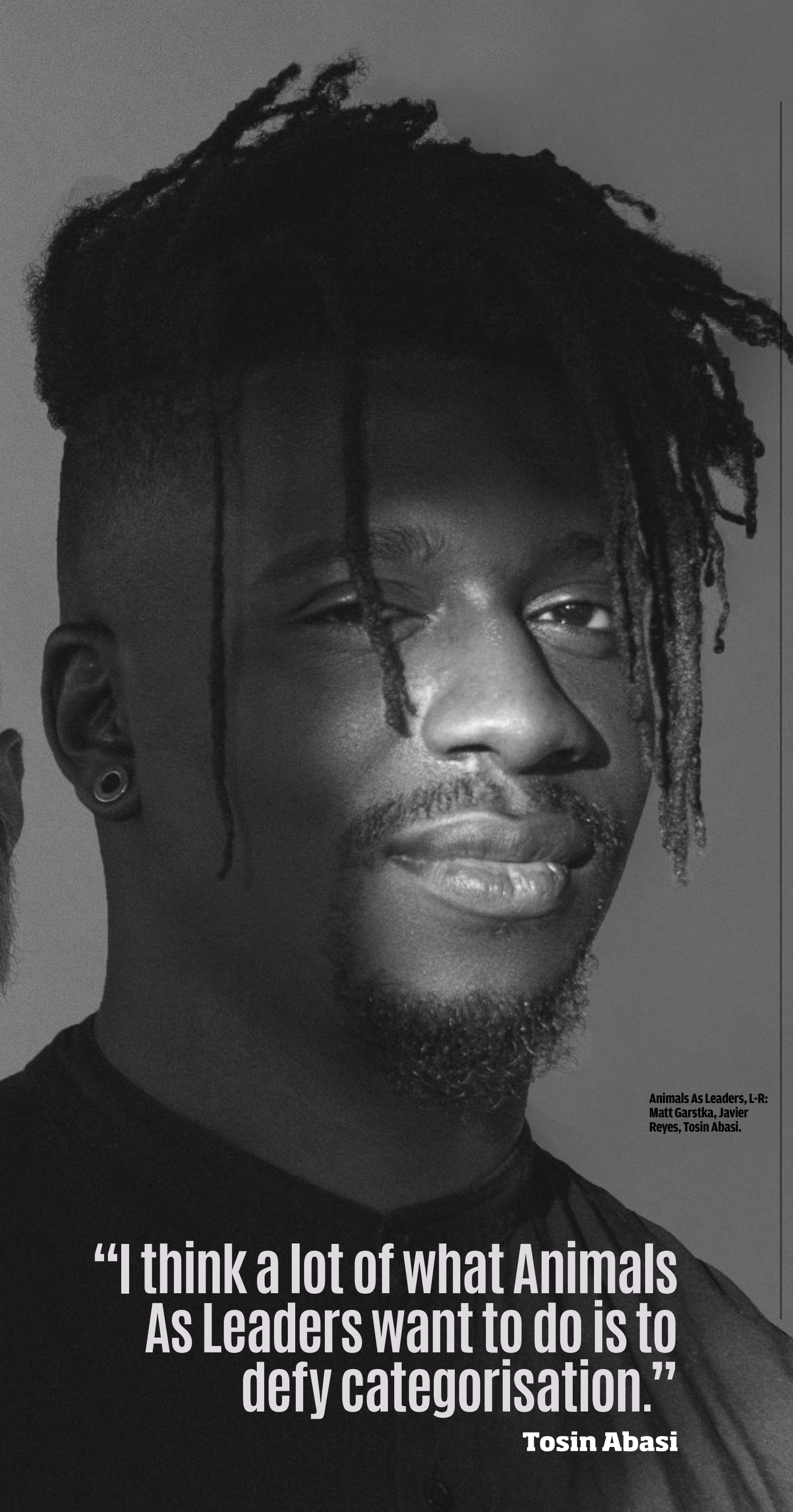
Toying With Time

On album number five, progressive fusion metal pioneers **Animals As Leaders** have gone heavier, but they've also become smarter. Guitarists Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes talk us through the importance of time and patience on *Parrhesia*, their most focused and fulfilling record yet.

Words: Phil Weller



Animals As Leaders, L-R: Matt Garstka, Javier Reyes, Tosin Abasi.

“I think a lot of what Animals As Leaders want to do is to defy categorisation.”

Tosin Abasi

Time, for Animals As Leaders, has always been a concept to be toyed with. The trio’s obsession with unusual rhythms, rudiments and subdivisions is what drives them. But until now, time has never been a concept the Washington-based band has taken at face value.

“This album is the one we’ve worked on the most,” says guitarist Javier Reyes of *Parrhesia*, the band’s fifth studio record. “It was nice to write with no real pressure or time constraints.”

Parrhesia, an Ancient Greek word that translates as ‘free speech’, is a liberating album of expressive aggression and intricacy. It’s their heaviest by a country mile, but it’s much more than just grunt and grit. It’s the sound of introspection and patience duly rewarded.

“It’s been nice to have the luxury of not being forced to create music because it allows for evolution,” co-guitarist Tosin Abasi adds. “A lot of the musical choices we’ve made are a result of that space and the ability to just listen and question what we want to happen with the songs. It allowed us to bring a fresh perspective to the album.”

Since their self-titled debut in 2009, the instrumental trio (two eight-string guitarists — Reyes and Abasi — and drummer Matt Garstka, whom Abasi describes as “a library of rhythms”) have carved out quite a name for themselves in both progressive and metal circles. Much of their early following was made up of fellow musicians, amazed by their proficiency. But their sound has developed and their appeal has broadened as they’ve learnt to better navigate their ideas to blend the complex with the contagious. As such, they’ve often been labelled a djent band. For Abasi, though, that doesn’t tell the whole story.

“It’s funny,” he smiles. “I remember when djent was kind of a joke and not a legitimate thing at all. I think we do fit relatively neatly into the progressive metal/djent genre, but we want to do much more than that and I think a lot of what Animals As Leaders want to do is to defy categorisation.”

Their 2011 release, *Weightless*, leaned heavier into their fusion side, but it wasn’t until *The Joy Of Motion* arrived three years later that their sonic concept felt fully formed. *The Madness Of Many* (2016) built on that, with what Reyes describes as a “fusion-y, up and down album”. Nylon-stringed guitars and quieter, more pensive moments provided much of its backbone, with their jazz and classical influences

dialled up, while their metal influences were scaled back. But after an intense decade of writing, recording, touring and repeating the cycle, it was time for the trio to take a breath and take stock.

"We took our time to minimise us repeating ourselves," Reyes reveals. "This new material definitely sounds like Animals As Leaders, but we wanted there to be something new about the sound. We'd meet up and write together for two or three weeks, and then maybe four months later do the same thing."

"It's that sharpening of the knife thing," Abasi adds. "We took the scope of elements we normally throw into [our] music and consolidated them to make a pretty direct album."

"We were allowing each song to really say something and for us to be confident in the material," Reyes expands. "There was no pressuring ourselves. We wanted to feel naturally inspired. Inspiration and creativity isn't a faucet; you don't just turn it on and off."

But not all songs went through such a patient process.

"*Monomyth* came out of nowhere," says Abasi. "It was originally a drum composition Matt had written of permutations and concepts. So we wrote the guitars after hearing the drums and it sort of wrote itself. There are a lot of heavy, complex, syncopated rhythms in that and I think it came out as a particularly strong song."

Another change in their creative process was the mixing. Reyes co-mixed the album with engineer Nick Morzov and his involvement opened up a world of new possibilities: "Being in the band allows me to mix creatively in a way that a third party wouldn't be able to do. They wouldn't be able to add a whole new synth layer or a whole new transition or cut out little parts here and there. But I'm allowed to do that.

Animals As Leaders' new album, *Parrhesia*.

"I think we mixed a good portion of the album a handful of times. It was just like, 'Okay this is cool', and then we'd hear somebody else's mix and be like, 'Goddammit, that's way cooler' and we'd try to figure out our process all over again and try to elevate the mix."

Through the very nature of their music, Reyes and Abasi are rightfully labelled virtuosos. In 2017, Steve Vai told *MusicRadar*, "When I think of guys that are creating things of great value right now, I think of Tosin." Two years later *Guitar World* ranked Abasi the second-best guitarist of the decade. So, does that put the weight of expectation on their shoulders to impress every time it comes to creating new music?

"I think the nature of the band is to show off a bit, right?" says Reyes. "But it got to that point because of a natural tendency to want to play complicated stuff. Through our writing, for both Tosin and myself individually, we don't necessarily feel the need to write complicated stuff. It's more that what we hear in our heads is apparently really complicated and very difficult to play. That hasn't really changed. But that's now coupled with having a career with the band and that our goal is to outdo ourselves from one album to the next. So we feel we have we have to show off and do cool new things as well."

"I think there's pressure for me as a lead guitarist because you want to live up to like the hyperbole," Abasi returns. His lead playing is more elegant than ever on *Parrhesia*. "But I agree with Javier. Everything I write does have an element of complexity to it just because that's the type of music I digest and it's how I express myself. I like rhythmic and harmonic complexity."

But what shines through the most on *Parrhesia* isn't so much the virtuosity at play as it is how they utilise it.

"It's about having the elements of catchy and complex at the same time," Abasi believes. "When I'm writing at my best you can sing the riff, but it's stimulating and complex enough that there's more there for you than just something that's instantly singable.

"I know when Javier writes a lot he'll actually be singing the melody. I think part of our brains are ideally wanting to centre on a musical phrase that is catchy but you still feel like there's a percentage of complexity that's gonna take you a few listens to understand."

Says Reyes, "Any time there's any complexity happening in a song and we need to come up with a melody, I look for how to counter and complement what's happening rhythmically. Something that's easy to listen to and identifiable but still leaves room to appreciate the rest of the music. When I sing stuff out, the melodies I write feel more natural. I think that's important."

As time moves forwards, so do Animals As Leaders. While the band are happy to talk up their "heaviest record yet", that line is disparaging of its finer details. The record has balls, but it also has brains. It's just as astute as it is aggressive and, ultimately, it represents everything that has earned the band such esteem in the most convincing way yet.

Parrhesia is out on March 25 via Sumerian. See www.animalsasleaders.org for more.

Animals As Leaders: it's complicated.

"I think the nature of the band is to show off a bit, right? But I think it got to that point because of a natural tendency to want to play complicated stuff."

Javier Reyes

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"*Jettison* was a companion through quite a difficult period for everyone. I feel like there's a slight triumph at now managing to get it out."

You're getting close to the edge, boys!

Journey Into The Unknown

First teased two years ago, *Jettison* is **And So I Watch You From Afar**'s grandest work to date. Originally conceived as a soundtrack to a movie yet to be made, it's taken the Belfast instrumental rockers five years to perfect. Guitarist Rory Friers takes *Prog* on a journey through a multimedia soundscape that finds them working with the Arco String Quartet, Emma Ruth Rundle and Clutch's Neil Fallon.

Words: Alex Lynham **Images:** Ciara McMullan

Jettison, the new album from Northern Irish instrumental rockers And So I Watch You From Afar, is a change of gear for many reasons. Most noticeably, it's a departure in tone compared to their 2017 album *The Endless Shimmering*. In place of the gut-punch riffs and towering bombast is a more nuanced progression, written and presented as a single 40-minute song. It's also a multimedia concept album, accompanied by a film created by visual artist Sam Wiehl. It's been a long time coming too, with the band first teasing it in 2020.

Guitarist and principal songwriter Rory Friers reflects on the effect that the last two years has had on *Jettison*: "In the process of making a record, you spend a lot of time with that music and usually by the time you're done with it – 'over it' is a bit harsh – but your mind moves on to other things. I was worried that there would be a sense of complete detachment from it, or it would feel like something that I no longer cared about. But weirdly it kind of became almost a totem of, 'This is the thing that is going to happen when things get back to normal.' It was a companion through quite a difficult period for everyone. I feel like there's a slight triumph at now managing to get it out."

Although they succeeded in premièring *Jettison* in full in 2021 at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, their plans to widely tour it were shelved. "We managed to do some [gigs], even though they weren't what we imagined when we wrote it," he explains. "We imagined we'd do a lot more of the actual show, [but] we did what we set out to do, which

was to build a show that was a live experience first and foremost, get people to experience it like that first, and then put the music out afterwards. The actual show, what we would call the bells-and-whistles version, is quite full-on, there's a lot of production. There's four other musicians, string players, that join us on stage. There's the visual world, created by Sam Wiehl, and we play behind this semi-transparent mesh screen. It's a whole production and that means it's quite difficult to tour, and it's expensive to tour. If we were maybe not coming out of two years of not being able to properly play shows and create a bit of income for the band, we'd be way more up for throwing caution to the wind and taking this show out more."

Moreover, they've also got other projects on the go, as Friers jokes, "I mean lockdown, c'mon, you've gotta write an album, surely?" He quickly clarifies: "It's probably not the time to talk about it, but we've already finished the next record. I always get in big trouble for talking about, in an interview about an album that's come out, another album. Yeah, we're gonna go and record a bunch of new songs we wrote last year when we were allowed [to meet] after the lockdown."

But back to *Jettison* and the visual world that artist Sam Wiehl has created to accompany it. Friers reveals that they went about the collaboration in a somewhat unusual way. The album's story is meticulously planned, but they didn't actually explain it to Wiehl. "There is a narrative within the entire thing that me and the guys kind of put in there as the [canonical] version of what's going on. It's what we're imagining," the guitarist reveals. "We got really nerdy film buff on it. It involves two characters and start-to-finish there's a quite complex story happening. There's nothing super-groundbreaking in terms of how it moves. It's got an intro, it's got peaks and troughs, there's drama in the middle, and resolve and triumph at the end. All these big tropes, but I felt like that was the way to go in terms of the complexity of all the collaborative aspects."

They even went as far as having an artist storyboard it: "We thought it would be fun in a few years to maybe release that as a poster or something on a special edition." Yet despite having written melodic motifs and an arc that fitted this narrative, the band still didn't expose Wiehl to it. Says Friers, "I didn't want it to be, 'Here's all my ideas' on top of my music. I wanted it to be almost the way a fan would interpret our song."

Nevertheless, as they were writing, their work with Wiehl did affect the album. Their initial ideas and demos were shared with the multimedia artist, and his feedback then shaped the flow of the finished record. "There was a lot of arrangement and rearrangement," remembers Friers. "I think the initial piece that I handed over to Sam was maybe 20 minutes long, and it had a lot of what's on the final record. It moved really fast though, it was like: part, part, part, which is often the way we put our songs together. We like fast-paced dynamics and flying from here to there, so then we quickly realised that this needed to be [sparser]. We needed to pull bits apart and create more space."

Jettison's themes of loss and grief are writ large, through to vocal samples from post-rock singer-songwriter Emma Ruth Rundle and Clutch vocalist Neil Fallon. In particular, the quotes that open and close the record give it a circularity, a feeling that Friers says is deliberate. "You can loop it round in several places, and it seamlessly reattaches to itself. There's lots of things like that we wrote into it, where there's musical progressions and melodies that are happening in different keys, or different timings, that aren't completely obvious. There's a lot of repetition and revisiting themes. There's a lot of actual bits of audio and bits of recordings that mean you could fold the song on top of itself and it would play into itself. There's all sorts of cool stuff like that." Within the context of the album, the samples are characters breaking the fourth wall, and speaking directly to the audience. "We thought it would be fun to have a couple of little moments where each one of the characters dips out of the secret world and talks a little bit of what's going on in that part of the song."

The tracking came together pretty quickly once they had the piece written. "I think we recorded the song in three days, pretty much, and most of it is live. There's very little overdubbed, you know?" It's appropriate that the results are so raw, for all its instrumental depth, as in some ways this is meant to be a live album. "We didn't want it to be something that was really wrought over," adds Friers. "We wanted it to feel like it was the band playing, having [that] feel rather than perfectionism in terms of playing. We were delighted, even hearing it back at the end of that third day. We thought it sounded just as it should."

Ready for your close-up? Belfast's And So I Watch You From Afar.

"It just so happens that the four of us are in a band because the place we like to go when we're together is less a familiar friend and more of a thrill-seeker's holiday."

Whether in their arrangements, the use of vocals or other textures, ASIWYFA have always pushed the boundaries. *Jettison* feels like a natural step along that road, with its widescreen arrangements supported by the Arco String Quartet. Still, Friers is keen to point out that however much they change, there's still an element that's immutable and distinctive. Experimentation isn't at the top of their minds; they just pursue what they find compelling. "It depends why you're in a band. There's dudes who form a band with their mates, and that's a space that they want to go to, and keep going back to. Why change it? That's what it's there for, and it's completely valid. It just so happens that we are in a band, the four of us, because the place we like to go when we're together is less a familiar friend and more of a thrill-seeker's holiday. You're going somewhere exciting and you don't really know what's going to happen."

Jettison is out now via Equal Vision. See www.asiwyfa.com for more information.

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Home alone: part of Spiritualized's latest album was created in solitude.

"If you're making any kind of art, I think you should have a healthy fear of treading water. You have to feel you can go further, find a new, better way of making a statement."

FLYING HIGH AGAIN

Hot on the heels of their recent reissues campaign, **Spiritualized** return with a new studio album, *Everything Was Beautiful*. Mainman Jason Pierce emerges from hibernation to discuss the band's ninth record and his mission to make the music on it sound as natural as possible in an unnatural environment.

Words: Johnny Sharp **Images:** Sarah Piantadosi

Jason Pierce is puzzled at the idea of being interviewed by *Prog*. He doesn't really feel that his band Spiritualized are a rock band.

"I'm obsessed with rock'n'roll," he explains over a cup of tea in a pub near his home in London's Spitalfields, "but I don't really like *rock* music."

Well, maybe he's a little too close to it to judge. Because whether it's by default or by design, Spiritualized have built a body of work that takes blues, R&B and rock'n'roll tropes, and mutates them, via a kosmische post-krautrock, quasi-prog long-form approach to writing and performance, into hypnotic, captivating musical experiences. The climactic piece of Spiritualized's best-loved album, 1997's *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*, is 17 minutes long. He's long had a penchant for orchestration and symphonic accompaniment to his music, not to mention gospel choirs. *Prog* is bound to note how he sits down on stage like Robert Fripp, hunched over his guitar, lost in his performance bubble. And as he'll explain, while he's no multi-instrumentalist maestro, he's an obsessive perfectionist, forever in search of microscopic refinements to his artistic vision.

Superficial similarities? Maybe, but if he's not a progger, he seems like a fellow traveller. A space cadet whose orbit coincides with ours more often than he realises. That holds true once more on the new Spiritualized album *Everything Was Beautiful*, a typically dreamlike journey that invites you to lie back, put on some noise-cancelling headphones and be transported for a heady trip around Planet Pierce.

That planet, it turns out, has been a dangerous place to be at times in recent years. In 2005 he was hospitalised with double pneumonia. His heart stopped twice after his lungs filled with fluid, inspiring 2008's *Songs In A&E* (a concept album? You decide). He underwent chemotherapy for long-term liver disease during the making of 2012's *Sweet Heart Sweet Light*. The new album begins with a bleeping heart monitor, perhaps appropriate for an opening song, *Always Together With You* that was originally demoed in 2014, at a time when he was in a more fragile state than the surprisingly healthy-looking 56-year-old *Prog* meets.

Not that he's out of danger, either – given his previous issues, he was among those immunocompromised folk that had to be extra careful over the past two years given the increased risks they faced from Covid-19.

"I was very scared about the pandemic," he says with a rueful smile. "When it first started being reported I felt a bit like the guy walking around with 'The End Is Nigh' on a sandwich board, saying, 'This is serious!' Friends were just saying, 'It's flu, get over yourself.' But I was very fearful.

"I've had double pneumonia so I know what that feels like to not be able to breathe and the idea was just horrific. Thankfully, I don't mind solitude, I'm fine with myself."

The enforced isolation also helped Pierce plunge himself in a process that he finds at once painful yet compulsory, of fine-tuning an album to the nth degree. Which is kind of odd, because *Everything Was Beautiful* has an airy, organic feel to it, as if recorded live, rather than using 11 different studios before the pandemic forced him indoors for the final stages of making the record.

"Yeah, that's part of the key to it. It can't sound overwrought, it has to sound natural. But often the bassline might be laid down months apart from the drum track. So it's a weird process."

Just as Dolly Parton once said, "it takes a lot of time and money to

Jason Pierce is laying it down slow...

look this cheap", achieving the sounds in Jason Pierce's head can take a whole lot of work, to the point where he sends himself slightly insane: "You'll hear the tracks three or 4,000 times, and I get obsessed with sibilance, which is very sharp in modern digital recordings."

For the uninitiated, those are the harsh pops and distorted hisses you get when you sing the letters 'p' 't', 'ch' or 's' into a microphone. "You listen to Ray Charles or The Beatles and there's not this harsh sound. Yet on *Always Together With You*, for example, it's a big band — there's horns, strings, choirs and whatever. So I find it weird when the 's' and 't's of the lyric are louder than a 40-piece orchestra. It doesn't happen in real life. So I chase it down, obsessively. And I think that slightly OCD approach is worth it."

It seems that way. One of the most atmospheric yet huge sounding and orchestrally enhanced tracks on the record is *The Mainline Song* (surely the most Spiritualized songtitle in history), which began life as an instrumental before events outside his control ended up giving it the key element it needed.

"It was one of the last songs we recorded, but I didn't have a lyric, then lockdown happened."

With the streets around his home deserted, Pierce felt inspired to bring to life a vision of creeping through the capital while the city was hibernating. Halfway through the song's six minutes, he half-whispers, *'Hey, keep your voices down / Everyone is asleep uptown and I wanted to see if you wanted to know if you wanted to go to the city tonight.'* It was partly inspired by doing such a night manoeuvre himself.

"There was something deeply special about that time," he explains. "Lockdown was like being in a time machine. The skies were clear, no chemtrails, no noise, birdsong, and the river was absolutely still. I stood on my own on Tower Bridge one evening and saw not another living soul."

"It was meant to be a double but nobody [among his management and label] wanted it. I mean *nobody*. It really felt like people's attention spans are getting shorter and shorter."

Everything Was Beautiful has been a good while in gestation, much of it written around the same time as 2018's *And Nothing Hurt*. It was also initially intended to be the second half of a double album, a prog-friendly term seldom heard outside these pages.

"It was meant to be a double but nobody [among his management and label] wanted it. I mean *nobody*. It really felt like people's attention spans are getting shorter and shorter. So I shelved half of it until now."

Not quite the prog approach, but given what he's told us it might be better for his mental health. Ultimately, Jason Pierce appears to be a man who is, if not quite in search of the lost chord, forever driven by his own particular notion of artistic progression.

"If you're making any kind of art, I think you should have a healthy fear of treading water. You have to feel you can go further, find a new, better way of making a statement," he says.

One reason he's reluctant to admit an affinity to prog is he associates it with over-complication: "For me, too much of it is 'look how many notes we can play with our fancy fingerwork'. I won't look for words with seven syllables when one will have more gravitas. There's also a beautiful simplicity, for me, in the perfect pop song, and I feel it's good to chase that."

But on further reflection, he adds a caveat.

"Having said that, I kind of like over-elaborating the simple. These are fundamentally one-chord, two-chord songs and I like finding a way to make them broader, with more to fall into, something that blows your mind thanks to the interplay of the instruments creating it... or maybe something in the sonics that you're not familiar with."

There's something of the mad scientist about Jason Pierce, particularly when he says things like, "You know if you hear a 440hz signal, it resonates in a primitive way because your brain resonates at exactly that frequency itself?" His music is famously full of drug metaphors, and it seems like he's experimenting in the hope of creating the ultimate lasting, all-enveloping high — in himself first, before any audience comes into it.

"Enveloping — it's a good word, isn't it? I've always listened to music for that feeling of being immersed. I picture an audience of one person — often myself — rather than a stadium full of people singing along, as transcendent as that feeling can also be."

Wherever you see Spiritualized on the spectrum of modern music, Jason Pierce continues to make sounds that do what true music obsessives have always demanded from the art form: they transport you to better places. And the least we can do, on our parallel journeys, is wave to each other.

New album *Everything Was Beautiful*.

Everything Was Beautiful is out now via Bella Union. See www.spiritualized.com for more information.

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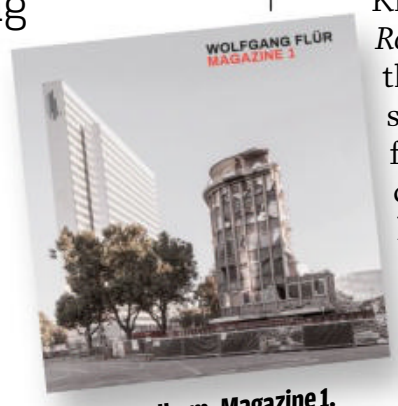
THE PROG INTERVIEW

Wolfgang Flür

Every month we get inside the mind of one of the biggest names in music. This issue it's **Wolfgang Flür**. The drummer, who teamed up with Michael Rother in Spirits Of Sound, is best known for playing percussion with **Kraftwerk** between 1973 and 1987. Along with Conny Plank, he formed part of the band's shift from krautrock towards a more electronic, synthetic sound. Now, 35 years after his departure, he's released a new solo album that finds him collaborating with a host of experimental artists, including Midge Ure and Claudia Brücken. *Prog* catches up with him to look back on his groundbreaking work and find out how he almost worked with David Bowie.

Words: Julian Marszalek



New solo album, Magazine 1.

Though there are many disciples and offspring who follow in their wake, few are bands or artists who can claim with any degree of honesty to have altered the course of music. Occupying that rarefied space are Kraftwerk, a group so far ahead of the curve that the ramifications of their work are still being felt to this very day. Their run of albums from 1974's *Autobahn* through to *Computer World* in 1981 remain peerless examples of a whole new genre of music being created that at once anticipated the future while simultaneously defining it.

Crucial to the band's rise was electronic percussionist Wolfgang Flür. Born in Frankfurt in 1947, Flür began to make his name as a drummer in the 60s first with the punningly named and Merseybeat-inspired The Beathovens and then with Spirits Of Sound where he was joined by future Kraftwerk member and Neu! founder Michael Rother.

But it's for his work with Kraftwerk that Wolfgang Flür will be best remembered. Joining founders Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider after the release of Kraftwerk's third album, *Ralf Und Florian*, Flür aided the pair in pushing their synthesised agenda further forward by helping to create an electronic drum kit. So while the game-changing *Autobahn* was the last Kraftwerk album to feature traditional instruments such as guitars, violins and flutes, it was the first to entirely eradicate acoustic drumming and rhythms. In the process, Kraftwerk rejected entirely the influence of British and American rock and blues-based music for a vernacular that saw this uniquely German band reinvent and reclaim its musical culture after the horrors of the country's recent past. And in doing so, they ushered in a new epoch of musical modernity that set off a big bang that exploded in all manner of directions.

> "I really must praise Karl in the years after the release of *Trans Europe Express*. It was so important to him. He kept the level up."

Although he left Kraftwerk under a cloud of inertia, Wolfgang Flür has continued to make music. His new album, *Magazine 1*, finds him working with a variety of artists inspired by Kraftwerk such as New Order's Peter Hook and Propaganda singer Claudia Brücken, as well seminal figures such as techno DJ Juan Atkins. So what better time to look back at his career?

You attempted to learn a variety of instruments in your youth. What made you decide that the drums were for you?

I played the mouth organ; that was my first instrument when I was a child, but at 17 I detected this drum kit from a skiffle band that played in our school's cellar and I was flabbergasted. I stood behind it and had, for the first time in my life, sticks in my hand. It was such a massive attack and impact on me. I immediately knew that this was my thing – making a loud noise!

Kraftwerk in New York circa 1975. L-R: Karl Bartos, Wolfgang Flür, Ralph Hutter, Florian Schneider.

MAURICE SEYMOUR/KRAFTWERK/GETTY IMAGES

PRESS/TOM STEINSEIFER

The man behind the machine: Wolfgang Flür.

I was not good and I had to have some lessons. My father engaged a drummer, who was also a teacher we had in lessons of mathematics, which I was not so good at in school. I hated mathematics, but he was a jazz drummer; that was the good thing. So he gave me a few lessons, but the Merseybeat was the thing: *boom, tchak! Boom, boom, tchak!* It was that simple thing and it helped me to get famous with Kraftwerk later.

You played with the Merseybeat-inspired band The Beathovens in the 60s. What lessons did you take away from that experience and did you apply any of them to your future career?

No. Nothing. But our classmate's father had a record shop, and that was fortunate to us. We had the first Beatles single when it came out and I put it on the turntable and we practised everything that was on it. We were pretty good at it. As for drumming, my microphone was parallel to my mouth. So singing was not so difficult to me during my amateur time and today I sing again on my new album.

In the late 60s, you played with Michael Rother in Spirits Of Sound who, with drummer Klaus Dinger, was in an early line-up of Kraftwerk. Was the music scene small in West Germany then?

It was shit that he left Spirits Of Sound! He broke with us because he was called to play with Kraftwerk and I hated him in that moment. I loved Michael not only as a guitarist, but also as a very close friend. The more I didn't see him, the more our friendship was less and less and he played his wonderful guitar with this synthesiser music.

It was a small underground scene. It was filled with bands who tried to do anything. Many came from the art scene and they were doing paintings, music, statues and happenings. We had underground clubs like The Creamcheese. People experimented so much. Even Kraftwerk were an experimental group when I met them. It was later when they made technopop. The scene was very much prepared for inventing something new, which was very contrary to what was being played on German radio.

Ralf and Florian asked you to join Kraftwerk while you were studying to be an architect. How did they hear about you?

It was difficult for them to find the right person to fill up their band. They always wanted to be a foursome, but their drummers were always a problem. Klaus Dinger always played too much and he had left them with Michael Rother. He was gone again, so they were left as a duo and had prepared their last record, *Ralf Und Florian*; that was the last record before I met them and they'd recorded that with a rhythm box. Still they searched for a drummer and they'd heard me playing with Spirits Of Sound two years before.

Was the plan for you to play acoustic drums? And would *Autobahn* have sounded more like a follow-up to 1973's *Ralf Und Florian* album without the electronic drums played by you?

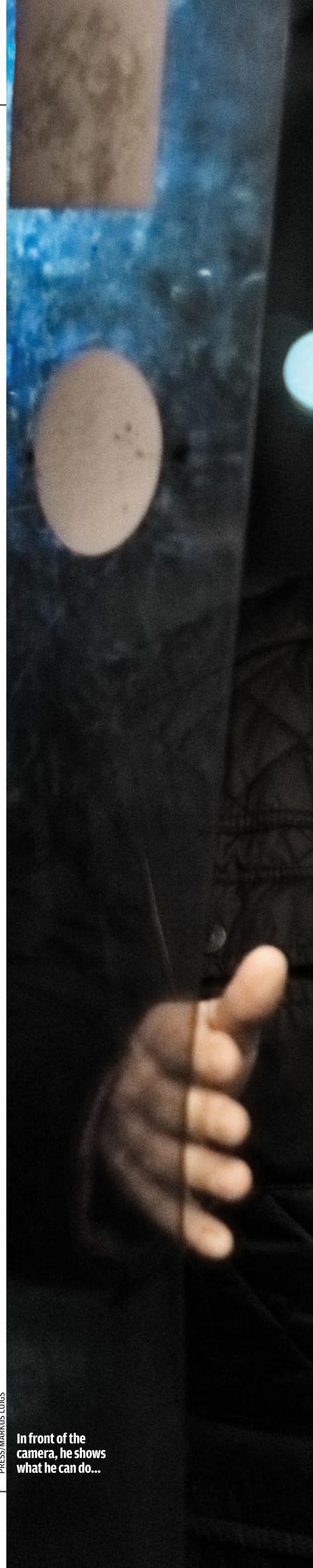
There was no plan. The thing was that they invited me to play on two or three tracks because they had an invitation to play on a culture programme on West German TV. Plus, they already had a song on German radio and TV called *Ruckzuck* where Florian played the flute. There were no vocals but it was a very good and very rhythmic thing and Ralf played the organ. It was used as the trailer for a German TV programme. It was also a hit in the Top 10.

I was a bit jealous of them because they'd had this success, but it made me proud because they asked me. On the other hand, I was enraged because they'd taken Michael Rother but then I thought, "Now I can be with Michael again in

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Kraftwerk in front of the world time clock in Tokyo's Keio Plaza Hotel in September 1981.

Game-changer: *Autobahn*, 1974.



PRESS/MARKUS LUIGS

In front of the camera, he shows what he can do...

> In Germany, we were not so acknowledged and we had bad press. They were idiots who called us 'electronic robots', 'too robotic', 'dolls' and 'puppets' and said that 'this music has no chance'.

Kraftwerk." When they took me to the rehearsal room, they said, "There is no Michael or Klaus because they left last week to form Neu!." And I thought, "Oh, I am alone with you crazy guys!"

Where did your enthusiasm for minimalist electronic drumming come from? It's very uncharacteristic for a drummer to want to do less.

It came from not knowing. I was just able to do that minimalistic thing, but I was able to do that in a brilliant way! I did variations of that minimalistic thing. All the bands I played in liked that I did not do too much drumming, but the points that were necessary were always on the point.

Kraftwerk described themselves as "industrial folk music" and they were certainly the most melodic band to have emerged from the German underground in the 70s. What was behind that?

My mother played schlager music, and pop music from South America like samba and waltz and rumba and foxtrot, so I had always this lovely music that was full of melodies, happy dancing and rhythms. Ralf and Florian listened to minimalists like Stockhausen, Terry Riley and others. Ralf was the melody maker, not Florian. He was the composer until Karl Bartos came, and Karl was very trained through his music studies. He was also very romantic in his melodies, which were made with technical sounds; it was technique meets romance.

How did you view the international success of 1974's *Autobahn*?

None of us had any idea that this piece would be received so well in America. In Germany, we were not so acknowledged and we had bad press. They were idiots who called us "electronic robots", "too robotic", "dolls" and "puppets" and said that "this music has no chance". It had to be, then, only in America and when the album came out there, there was a very clever DJ who said, "Of course, the track *Autobahn* is too long as it takes up a whole side of the album. We must shorten it to a radio-friendly length. It must be three minutes."

The edit spread across the country on the FM stations, the university student radio stations, the Black radio stations and

public radio. Everyone wanted to have it and suddenly we were invited to tour, which was supposed to be two months and then it became four months. It did not end! So many offers came in! There we were with our minimalistic show and there we were on Broadway!

I said goodbye to my nice boss at the architect's firm where I worked and he was nearly in tears.

Did your training as an architect and interior designer have any impact on Kraftwerk's visual representation?

Absolutely! I was always good at handicraft and I was always soldering things. I did more and more after that very famous electric drum kit that I made in my little workroom. We spoke about how we could appear onstage in the future after our first American shows because then it was only our synthesisers and our organ. I built another drum kit similar to the one Karl Bartos used, and they also had four neon lamps. That was all we used when we played at the Beacon Theatre on Broadway. Can you believe that? It was enough for people to go crazy. They had never seen synthesisers used like this.

How important was producer Conny Plank in shaping Kraftwerk's sound?

The synthesiser was born in America. Mr Moog was an American and the Moog was produced in America. It was brought over to Germany by Conny Plank and he gave one to Ralf and Florian. They didn't find this instrument; it was found by Conny Plank because he was always flying to America. He said, "I have something new for you and it's from Mr Moog", and he was the first to bring it over here. And it cost 8,000 DM [around £3,480]. That was the same price as a VW Beetle! That was so much in the 70s and regular musicians could not afford it. But Ralf and Florian came from wealthy homes and maybe they got the money from their parents. The other good fortune they had was their 'side father', Conny Plank, who co-produced them.

Kraftwerk made a series of incredibly influential albums including *Trans Europe Express*, *The Man Machine* and *Computer World*. Did you feel like pioneers?

This term "pioneers" came very late, maybe after I had already left Kraftwerk. In the 80s, it was acknowledged more and more. We had read many headlines and many articles in the press about that. Even David Bowie said that as well and the other English artists, including Bowie, wanted to work with us or be produced by us. But this did not work because Ralf and Florian, who were the founders, decided against it. They did not want to mix up our cultures. Nothing against England, but the music was too different; they didn't want to have guitars and drums or anything in the band. They would have said yes to only synthesisers, but then Bowie would have only been the singer in Kraftwerk and that was not possible. He was too strong in his own music and this mixture would not have given a good result. We wanted to work on our own, so that was a good decision by them, I think.

Kraftwerk's influence is felt across rock, hip hop, house, electro and pretty much every genre. How proud are you that music that is essentially European made such an impact in the US and beyond?

[Wipes away a tear]. Yeah. I find it hard to answer this correctly as I've never had the feeling of being famous. This fame thing,

PRESS/MARKUS LUIGS

Wolfgang Flür with some of his *Magazine 1* collaborators, Midge Ure and Peter Duggal.

I've never felt it. Of course, in the time that I was with them, especially during the Computer World tour in 1981, we felt enormous pride. We became very, very famous then, especially in Japan and America; everywhere, in fact, but not in Germany.

Did bicycles really bring about the demise of Kraftwerk's classic line-up?

The bicycles were my enemies! They broke everything! It was Ralf and Florian's new passion, especially Ralf. He was no longer interested in the music. I didn't see him in the studio; there were only the bicycles and the tyres lying around in the studio. Sometimes they arrived very late in the studio and sweating from all their riding in the mountains and around Düsseldorf.

Also, Karl was frustrated. He was the only one who was making music in the last years. Without him, there was no record done. He was very, very much working and composing and developing romantic melodies. I really must praise Karl in the years after the release of *Trans Europe Express*. It was so important to him. He kept the level up. But he was also so frustrated that nothing he did came out of the studio, so he built his own. He bought some of the same instruments with his own money, which he earned from his copyrights, and he prepared everything at his home. Sometimes, when they heard his writing – he came with prepared melodies and ideas to show them and ask them, "Should we do that?" – all they had to do was to say, "Yes." But they didn't.

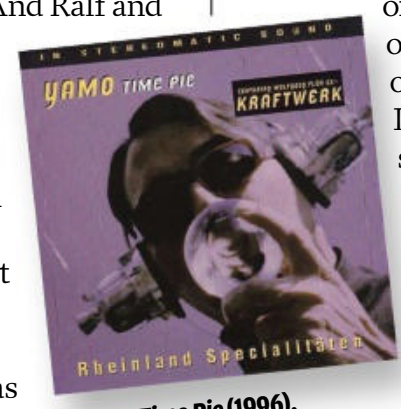
> Ralf and Florian listened to minimalists like Stockhausen, Terry Riley and others. Ralf was the melody maker, not Florian. He was the composer until Karl Bartos came.

Bicycles not included! Kraftwerk at Ancienne Belgique, Brussels in June 1981.

GIE KNAEPS/GETTY IMAGES

How was it for you after leaving?

We were friends at the beginning and the friendship became less and less. Everybody became older and everyone had less and less of the same interests. And Ralf and Florian were always talking about their bicycles and their new gearboxes and their new tyres from Michelin. At least they did a song about it; that was the best thing they did then, but in my mind, I was already out. But after *Tour De France*, it was then only Ralf's band. *Electric Café* was the last album that I did and that was, as we say in Germany, cold coffee for me. [Although Flür's name is listed, he has no musical credit on the album.] Everyone was looking in a different direction. We had no more connection. Our hearts were cold.



Yamo's Time Pie (1996).

How did Yamo come about?

It was a sudden idea 10 years later when I met Andi Toma from Mouse On Mars. I was working on some tracks and he was very much helping me. He was the best and correct guy to co-produce my songs. I suddenly had an offer from EMI and that was my rescue. Suddenly, I was in music again and my pride started then. I thought, "My goodness – that's my name on the record!"

My own career started with *Time Pie* [1996], that's for sure, but the record company didn't handle it well because there was a fight in between my former band and the bosses of EMI, and they didn't want to be releasing an album by an older member of the band with his own project on his old record company. It was my own fault signing with them. I'm an idiot because I had other offers, but I went with the best money offer. It was an important lesson.

What motivated you to make *Magazine 1*?

When I was touring with my Musik Soldat show, I played a small town in the UK called Hebden Bridge and I met a man called Peter Duggal. We talked very, very nicely. It felt as if we had been together for years. He was immediately like my brother. I didn't know what kind of musician he is, so he gave me some of his records and I listened to them and said, "Wow! This is so brilliant!" He does not make pop music; these were soundscapes. He had one called *Birmingham* and I asked him why it was called that and he said, "That is my birth town" and I said, "Let's make a pop song from that." I wrote the lyrics and had to learn much about Birmingham. We made more and more music together and we invited Juan Atkins and Carl Cox to join us and then many more friends – including Peter Hook, Claudia Brücken and Midge Ure.

My graphic designer said, "All the tracks are different and it's like looking into a newspaper or a magazine. You should call it *Magazine*!" I had not to think long and I said, "Let's call it that."

Is there anything else that you want to achieve?

Yes. The whole album is fun to listen to but there is one track on there called *Say No* that is the deepest in my heart. I am against everything that is militaristic or weapons. I have been since I was 16. I am a pacifist and a fan of the German author Wolfgang Borchert and his short stories. I have made book readings in Germany in schools and churches of his work and they are very, very often full. I made a promise to myself to bring Wolfgang Borchert alive on music and I lent him my voice to say no to anything to do with war. Do not compromise this whole machinery of war. Say no!

Magazine 1 is out now via Cherry Red. For more information see www.facebook.com/musiksoldat.

Edited by Dave Everley
prog.reviews@futurenet.com

New spins...

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

Finland's prodigal sibling trio serve up an early contender for Album Of The Year with their eighth LP.

Words: Polly Glass **Illustration:** Mark Leary

The Von Hertzen Brothers are often described as "hard to pigeonhole". By turns this has been a feather in their caps and an albatross around their necks – sometimes both at once. Too weird for the mainstream but far more accessible than that implies, they're a band who revel in musical idiosyncrasies *and* king-sized pop melodies. Purveyors of music that's both clever and hummable. The black sheep of modern rock, who also grew up with ABBA and choral singing (their parents met in a choir and, if the brothers' knack for immaculate, gauzy harmonies is anything to go by, the experience resonated in the family long after).

Back in 2015 they threw all their resources at the snappier, stadium-reaching *New Day Rising*. It didn't blow up as they probably hoped, and 2017 follow-up *War Is Over* marked a return to their progressive roots. Now, with *Red Alert In The Blue Forest*, they've remained in that space, using it to explore the "imbalance threatening our peaceful existence everyday" – including the loss of harmony between people and nature. Naturally they do this on their own enigmatic terms. A deeply personal record and a love letter to their motherland, with sentiments that translate universally, *Red Alert...*'s empowered battle cries come with a veil of ethereal serenity.

Such big themes demand a majestic, ambitious backdrop and the Von Hertzens don't disappoint, embracing a wealth of instrumentation alongside the Finnish folklore and icy, beautiful countryside of their childhood. There are also flavours of frontman Mikko's years in India, a serving of Anathema-style electronics, and the grandeur of the Pink Floyd records in the brothers' bloodstream. There are heavy moments, tender moments, haunting moments – often all within quick succession. And it's stunning.

Opener *Day Of Reckoning* sets a pensive tone, referencing *'ancient prophecies'* and asking *'is it all for something meaningful?'*, as it builds into an urgent chorus; the kind of smart but more-ish singalong that they do so well. The baltic chill of *Blue Forest* calls to mind Norwegian art rockers Gazpacho, steadily morphing into nine minutes of electronic beats, expansive synths and ominous undertones. After that *The Promise* feels comparatively slender; five minutes of folky Led Zeppelin vibes and celtic-sounding fiddles that crescendo into Mikko's ardent *'remember what you promised me'*.

Red Alert In The Blue Forest

DOING BEING MUSIC

> **Its big themes demand a majestic backdrop, and they don't disappoint.**

From here, the longer songs continue. *All Of A Sudden You're Gone* is a seven-minute mini epic with a stick-in-your-head chorus, evoking images of forests in dark fairy tales with its violin, gentle folk harmonies and blissed-out brass. The 10-minute *Peace Patrol* starts out a bit like *White Wedding* if Billy Idol had taken a detour via Kerala before revealing another huge refrain – complete with King Crimson saxophone and a devastating, David Gilmour-esque solo. It's followed by 'light relief' of sorts with the electronic shanty shuffle *Pirates Of The Raseborgian*, ending with the creaking of what might be said pirates' ship.

Above all this is an album that thrums with the influence of nature (guitarist Kie's godfather was one of the early Finnish environmentalist pioneers, while youngest brother Jonne is a keen birdwatcher by day). The soaring *Northern Lights* even includes sounds of the natural phenomenon it's named after, as captured by acoustics researcher Professor Unto K Laine. The touching, delicately layered *Anil* takes its name from a West Indian shrub, while *Söderskär* – think *The Wall* via a deeper, more emotive Jose Gonzalez – shares its own with an isolated lighthouse on a remote Finnish islet (said to have inspired Moomins creator Tove Jansson).

Arguably language has had a greater bearing on the Von Hertzens' sound (and, perhaps, their fortunes) than one might imagine – one suggestion as to why so many more of their peers in Sweden make waves internationally. "The roots of Swedish are the same as English," Kie has said. "Finnish is in another bracket. And there's a deeper cultural difference, because we're more tied into Russian and Eastern European heritage."

But really, that element of foreignness acts in their favour. The brothers' inimitable Nordic tones are part of their appeal, helping to make *Red Alert...* as transportive as it is. It's the shot of *je ne sais quoi* that binds their collection of prog, rock, folk and electronic sensibilities. No one sounds like them.

It's left to the sweetly melancholic *Disappear There* to conclude proceedings, meditating on the unknowable nature of mortality, drawing a line under what history might show to be the Von Hertzens' masterpiece. A fitting end to a record that goes on a wild adventure, but ultimately ends staring into the campfire as darkness thickens.

ARCHIVE

Call To Arms & Angels PIAS

Collective take an eclectic approach on first studio album in six years.

It's a brave furrow that Darius Keeler and Danny Griffiths have ploughed with Archive since first emerging in the mid-90s, expanding their sound to incorporate elements of post-rock, electronica and progressive influences in recent years. Brave because, in simplistic terms, they've often seemed a touch too progressive for their initial fanbase, and not prog enough for uncompromising foes of the 4/4 beat. Since the mid-2000s Archive have also been a collective, with several different vocalists to serve as varying focal points. That allows them to be as sonically diverse as they see fit but also makes it hard to pin down a characteristic 'Archive sound'.

> **It's a haunting, disorientating listen at times.**

Casting their stylistic net even further and wider hasn't pleased everyone either: many reviewers found 2016's *The False Foundation* too eclectic, to the point of sounding more like a compilation of different artists than the work of one band. A familiar hazard for any genre-hopping, mic-swapping act, perhaps, and on *Call To Arms & Angels*, listeners who like to be kept guessing as to what the next track is going to sound like will find a whole lot to get stuck into here.

In their time away, Archive have worked up a double album's worth of material — 17 tracks, 100-plus minutes of music — which maintains an arresting contrast between the four main voices that feature. Holly Martin's vibrato-flecked vulnerability adds resonance to *Shouting Within*'s tale of social alienation, and then turns cold and menacing amid the swirling techno-rock maelstrom of *Numbers*.

Further in, Dave Pen's plaintive tenor is the desolate soul drowning in agoraphobia at the heart of the 14-minute *Daytime Coma* — again channelling feelings of locked-down isolation — then the delicate warble of Maria Q brings the evocative lament of *Head Heavy* to life before banks of harmonies offer a sense of hope. Sometimes it's far from clear exactly who — or what — is singing. Pollard Berrier's falsetto on *Enemy* yearns for escape as eerie robo-voices threaten over neurotic techno pulses. The digitised treatment coating the harmonies crawling, ghostlike over the prowling bass groove of *Fear There And Everywhere* sounds equally disembodied — a haunting approach reminiscent of Goblin in their prime.

There's plenty of beauty too, though, as on the beautifully seductive piano paean *Surrounded By Ghosts* that opens the set (even if it's deliberately lulling us into a false sense of security) and the sweetly evocative, trip-hoppy melancholia of *We Are All The Same*. It all makes for a haunting, disorientating listen at times, one that leaves the listener not quite knowing where they are or what they've been listening to. But maybe that's just the way Archive like it.

JOHNNY SHARP

AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR

Jettison EQUAL VISION

Post-rockers' adventure into long-form music is a stunning success.

Having written the score for 2017 horror movie *The Cured*, ASIWYFA guitarists Rory Friers and Niall Kennedy were open to making more long-form compositions. *Jettison* is the result, with the band creating 40 minutes of music and visual artist Sam Wiehl retrofitting a film to it.

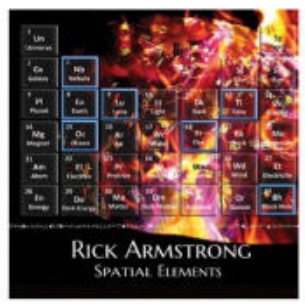
Even without the attendant imagery, *Jettison* is a compelling listen. The band's post-rock DNA is present in *Lungs*, where blipping math guitar lines give way to more majestic ones, but the real revelation is their control over what is essentially one long, unified piece. Musical motifs established on lulling opener *Dive Pt 1* are developed assuredly, and pleasingly throughout.

Completed by drummer Chris Wee and bassist Johnny Adgers, the band have a masterful way with tone and dynamics. Emma Ruth Rundle and Clutch's Neil Fallon add hip spoken-word moments, but *Jettison*'s class is super-boosted by the elegant work of Belfast's Arco String Quartet and orchestrator Connor O'Boyle. *In Air*'s uplifting string moments and *AD Poet*'s low, portentous ones are just two highlights in this detailed, stately work that aims high and more than delivers. **GRM**

RICK ARMSTRONG

Spatial Elements RANDOM DISTURBANCE RECORDS

Cosmic ambience best experienced by feel.



It was Brian Eno who opined that ambient music "must be as ignorable as it is interesting." It's an intriguing concept and one that challenges the listener to allow the soundscapes to blend with the atmosphere of their surroundings rather than zoning in on the noises. So it's all a bit like listening to politicians on the news denying any law-breaking during lockdown.

And yet by focusing in on the music created by Rick Armstrong, it can become a little too easy to spot the influences of Tangerine Dream and Vangelis. As evidenced by *The Pillars Of Creation* and *Valley Of The Time Tombs*, Armstrong is more concerned with creating sweeping soundscapes than subtle changes in rhythm or the use of sequencers, though this is balanced out by seductive opener *Heart Of Iceland* as well as the pulsing *Magmatica*. Augmented by Marillion's Steve Rothery and fellow guitarist Dave Foster, Armstrong crafts music that ripples rather than flows.

By taking Eno's advice to its natural conclusion, *Spatial Elements* is an album best enjoyed with the least amount of effort for the maximum amount of benefit. **JM**

A-TOTA-SO

Lights Out BUTTONPUSHER RECORDS

Underground math-proggers take a big step forwards.

Originally formed in 2016 during the hiatus of cult rockers Alright The Captain, A-Tota-So have found a niche of their own. Even after the reformation of ATC, guitarist Marty Toner, bassist Chris March and drummer Jamie Cattermole haven't rested on their laurels.

The most noticeable difference between this, their second album, and 2018's self-titled instrumental debut is the addition of vocals. Every track has a different guest vocalist, with electric contributions from members of fellow UK underground acts Sang Froid, Sugar Horse, No Violet and God Alone. Musically, too, it's far more striking than its predecessor, with metallic rocker *Choke* rubbing shoulders with the more pensive *Sad Lamp*.

It's on heavier cuts such as *Squirrel Bait* and frantic closer *When The Waves Come* that the band come across at their best and most sinuous. However, the album's greatest strength is, in a sense, its weakness: only its polished production separates *Lights Out* from a live album. Although they've pushed themselves and the format, A-Tota-So's arrangements and instrumentation are still those of a guitar band playing in a room. **AL**

NANNA BARSLEV

Lysbærer BY NORSE

Nordic folk songwriter's solo debut.

Although this fur-caped, historically fixated Dane is proud to call herself a "Viking music artist", she has never shied away from blending her love of traditional Scandinavian roots music with more modern musical forms. But on her first outing under her own name, Nanna Barslev has focused on her enduring passion, penning nine tracks of richly evocative, gothically tinged pagan folk.

Still, this is no stripped-down affair. Her skills playing an array of traditional instruments are accompanied by subtly cinematic orchestrations, with the result that tracks, such as the atmospheric, trance-like *Skjoldmo,* echo some of Dead Can Dance's most bewitching work. Barslev's versatile voice reaches into the soprano range on *Sunna Sol*, amid twitchy whisperings that add to the feeling of mystical powers at work around her. The crackling campfire in the background of *Rhimfaxe*'s mournful, violin-streaked requiem adds further captivating rustic vibes, but the album is also not without inviting folk-rock hooks, as found on the snappy instrumental motifs of *Runebundet*. *Lysbærer*, the song notes explains, means "carrier of light". Long may it shine. **JS**

BLOOD INCANTATION

Timewave Zero CENTURY MEDIA

Deathly space cadets take a dark, ambient trip.

One of the most creative bands in death metal, Blood Incantation have been hinting at a more progressive detour for some time now. *Timewave Zero* shrugs off the brutality that the Colorado crew showcased on 2019's *Hidden History Of The Human Race*, leaving only its undulating waves of modular synth behind.

Conceptually steeped in all manner of esoteric cosmic thought, this is a more evolved expression of the shimmering textures that lurked between gnarly riffs. A debt to Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze and the pioneers of free-form electronica is self-evident, but Blood Incantation remain entrenched in the Lovecraftian dread of underground metal. Both the 21-minute *Io* and its 20-minute counterpart *Ea* pass through hypnotic phases where the vibes are queasy and unknowable threats audibly bubble up to the sonic surface, puncturing an otherwise smooth carapace of sequenced synths.

Designed to be consumed in one mind-expanding hit, *Timewave Zero* is the sound of alien shapes colliding in slow-motion in the pitch-black depths of space. Or at least it will be for anyone who gets robustly stoned first. **DL**

CHAS CRONK

Liberty RENAISSANCE RECORDS

Strawbs bassist frees his creativity in lockdown.

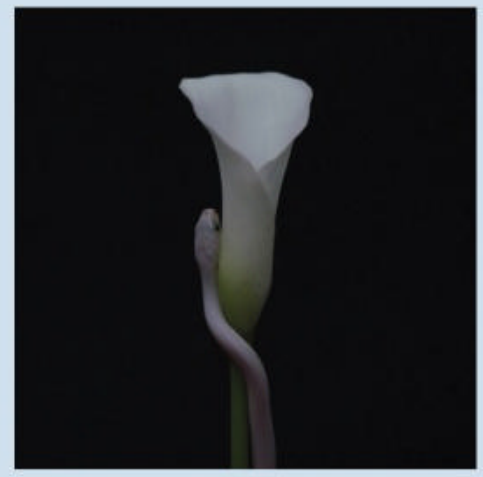
Longtime bassist with the Strawbs, Chas Cronk had only released one solo album before this, the New Age/ambient *Mystic Mountain Music* in 2002. After premiering a new track during lockdown, reworking a couple of previously released songs and being convinced to extend a mooted EP into a full-length album, Cronk found himself composing the rest of this collection – songs designed to be hopeful, positive and forward-looking.

There's little in the way of wilful complexity here – it focuses on accessible arrangements and vocals, and the album has much that is redolent of the 70s and 80s with *Take My Hand* and *System Overload* veering towards smooth, easy 80s synthpop. Then there are tracks like *A Splash Of Blue* (reworked from the Lambert Cronk album *Touch The Earth*) putting a dreamy spin on something Mike + The Mechanics could have written. With lovely synth sounds, wistful choruses, and a couple of gorgeous guitar solos from Dave Lambert (A *Splash Of Blue*) and Dave Bainbridge (*Slipping Downstream*) it might not be a challenging listen, but it is a reflective, uplifting and heart-warming one. **GMM**

ANIMALS AS LEADERS

Parrhesia SUMERIAN RECORDS

Prog metal shred kings stick to their comfort zone.



It's been a long wait for fans of eight-string guitar virtuosity, but six years after *The Madness Of Many*, Animals As Leaders return with *Parrhesia*. Taking its title from the Greek phrase for 'free speech', it sees guitarists Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes and drummer Matt Garstka wasting no time diving into a world of technical wizardry and odd measure mayhem with the opening *Conflict Cartography*.

> **The playing is as outrageously dextrous as ever.**

The overall sound is less heavy than its predecessor, though that doesn't mean Animals don't deliver distortion and intensity when the spirit is upon them. Yet *Parrhesia* feels less sonically adventurous than much of their previous work, for example compared to the way they explored myriad guitar sounds and textures in 2014's *The Joy Of Motion*.

As a trio, Animals As Leaders seem more single-minded than fellow instrumentalists The Aristocrats, who delight in playing with different styles and twisting familiar genres into strange shapes. Animals stay firmly rooted in progressive rock and metal, although they've helped launch their own subgenre within that scene, which now includes Arch Echo and Plini who've both risen in their wake. While there were precursors such as Liquid Tension Experiment or Scale The Summit, Animals were undoubtedly linchpins in the popularisation of extended range guitars and the modern polyrhythmic style of drumming that's become so prevalent at the heavy end of the prog scene.

On that front, the playing is as outrageously dextrous as ever. *Monomyth* boasts a stuttering, staccato riff and sees Garstka going hell for leather on his kick drum pedals. It's not all delivered flat-out, they build dynamic peaks and valleys into the arrangements, although that's all relative. When they ease back, as in the restrained sections of *Red Miso*, it's still far busier than anything a more mainstream rock or metal band would attempt. Fortunately, the shorter, drum-free piece *Asahi* provides a gentle palate cleanser halfway through the album before it's back to the pummelling grooves and dizzying fretboard runs.

Thoughts And Prayers opens with tumbling guitar lines that lead into a bruising djent workout, while *Micro Aggressions* is almost manically intense, a chop-busting whirlwind of shredding. The album wraps with *Gordian Naught*, with Abasi and Reyes playing percussive riffs that work in and around Garstka's relentless battering, all culminating in an abrasive, angry outro. While it's a minor disappointment that there's less variety here in the production than on earlier albums, there's a wealth of musical information to digest. Just don't try to chew it all at once.

DAVID WEST

ENVY OF NONE

Envy Of None KSCOPE

Rush's Alex Lifeson returns to the fray with unexpected collaboration.

Any new project with Rush's Alex Lifeson attached will come freighted with big expectations, but for best results it's worth taking the darkpop project Envy Of None for what it is — a rewarding collaboration with friends, old and new.

> **An engaging album that rewards repeat listens.**

A pal of Lifeson's since the 80s, Andy Curran (of Canadian rockers Coney Hatch) stumbled across Portland-based singer Maiah Wynne five years ago via a song contest. As Curran and Wynne worked on music with co-producer/engineer Alf Annibalini, Lifeson was intrigued by what he heard, and contributed his considerable talents to their debut album.

Produced to within an inch of its life, *Envy Of None* is a headphone album — that's the only way to capture all the details of the modern sound palette here. Synthy bass, machine-like beats and a miasma of sound design and effects imbue the likes of *Shadow*. Here and throughout, 25-year-old Wynne sells their cocktail of dark, goth-inflected pop with skill beyond her years. Nuanced, feminine and with tonal colour and control, her beguiling vocals align with the current crop of edgier female pop artists led by Billie Eilish.

The nicely twisted *Enemy* brings ominous chords and recognisable Lifeson guitar tones, the Muse/Garbage mash-up *Liar* is a fuzzy earworm, and *Look Inside* is packed with strong melodic lines and dreamy lyrics (*'Paint me with sadness, fill me with shadows, wash me away like tears in the rain'*). If Massive Attack is a reference, this is *Teardrops'* distant cousin — not prog per se, but grand in its own right.

Some moments fall flat (the underwritten *Never Said I Love You*; the fey, Depeche Mode-referencing *Dumb*), but the infectious *Dog's Life* is a punchy electro soup served with big chunks of doom, and the lovely ballad *Old Strings* is all the better for dialling down the effects and letting Wynne just do her thing, as gorgeous pedal steel-like guitars swell tastefully behind her.

Two Lifeson instrumentals have been rewritten for the group. The drifting, Middle Eastern-flavoured *Kabul Blues* is more mood piece than song, but the lolloping *Spy House* — with robust guitars and lyrical/squealy lead breaks — works better. Written by Lifeson after visiting Neil Peart near the end of his life, *Western Sunset* is the sole instrumental here. Acoustic guitars, textured strings, brushed snare drum and mournful slide guitar lines make for a poignant coda.

Sometimes overwrought but always sophisticated, *Envy Of None* is the sound of veteran artists and a rising star producing an engaging album that rewards repeat listens. Crucially, superstar player aside, it succeeds on its own terms.

GRANT MOON

EMPIRE SPRINGS

The Luminescence EMPIRESPRINGS.BANDCAMP.COM

Impressive prog metal-styled sci-fi ruminations.

Alabama four-piece Empire Springs' debut album was conceived as a thematically connected science fiction concept piece "primarily about self-reflection and discovery". Each track is designed to run into the next, with at least one musical reference that connects the songs.

Occupying a sonic space somewhere between Dream Theater, Riverside and Devin Townsend's more mainstream projects, the album covers plenty of ground. Gentle piano lines morph into washes of keyboard and full band riffing in opener *Chasing Light*, while the title track delivers crunching guitars that give way to reflective vocals. *Khan*'s huge guitar solo section bursts out of an otherwise low-key soundscape, vying for the prize for dramatic dynamic shifts with the pulsing *Drawing Lines*.

Keyboardist Chadwick McDowell merits particular mention since his work, especially on piano, shines through on *Chasing Light* and the sparse, lyrical instrumental *Interlude* which acts as a mid-album breather. *The Luminescence* would be an impressive album regardless of the artist and Empire Springs have set themselves a high bar at the first time of asking. **GMM**

ROGER ENO

The Turning Year DEUTSCHE GRAMMOFON

A sequence of masterpieces in miniature.

Roger Eno says he was surprised to be invited to record a solo album for esteemed classical label Deutsche Grammofon after he and his older brother Brian released 2020's *Mixing Colours*. He's being unduly modest. Since the 1980s he's been involved in numerous releases that have stepped, albeit gently, beyond conventional ambient tropes to fashion ravishing music blessed with weight and depth.

Each of the 14 pieces here is a miniature world that invites repeated exploration. Deceptively simple piano melodies with occasional frostings of treated atmospherics are also augmented by string ensemble Scoring Berlin. Their languid adornments suggest bucolic moods as they caress harmonious points of departure, decorous modulations and graceful cadences.

With Satie-like poise, *The Turning Year* evokes a sense of place wherein there stirs a poignant mix of fond remembrance and aching loss for that space and time to which we can never return. As powerful as it is moving, Eno's ability to orchestrate this complex undertow of emotions and get to the very essence of things, with sparse yet convincing elements, evidences a master at work. **SS**

GAZPACHO

Fireworking At St Croix KSCOPE

Livestreamed reading of *The Fireworker* and more.

When Norwegian prog explorers Gazapacho had their 2020 tour put on indefinite ice, they opted for what would prove to be a popular lockdown alternative: the livestreamed gig. Playing that year's *Fireworker* LP at their Fredrikstad rehearsal rooms allowed them to emulate its drama and dynamics more accurately than they could probably hope for live.

Even if the lack of bodies in front of them subtracts certain atmospheric elements, the epic Wagnerian symphonic crescendo to the 20-minute suite *Space Cowboy* erupts as powerfully as on record and the rest of the album, performed faithfully in track order, demands a certain hushed awe. Arguably more rewarding still, though, is the second half of the set, featuring some of the band's less episodic earlier compositions. *Substitute For Murder* is graced by Jon-Arne Vilbo's gripping Rothery-esque guitar, and Jan-Henrik Ohme's yearning vocals are particularly affecting as *The Walk* gathers emotional pace.

Most effectively realised of all is the melancholy melodic pull of *Winter Is Never*, which proves a beautifully elegiac way to sign off a set played in such uncertain times. **JS**

WOLFGANG FLÜR

Magazine 1 CHERRY RED

Kraftwerk survivor and friends launch a live wire.

'*Meet me in the West Midlands*', coos Propaganda vocalist Claudia Brücken on *Birmingham*, one of several tracks here that mess playfully with the fabric of krautrock and electronica. While the UK's second city may be a long way from any autobahn, the coltish wit of 74-year-old Wolfgang Flür's new album, made with a fun posse of collaborators, is more enjoyably true to the old spirit than any po-faced repetition of tropes would have been. The Kraftwerk alumnus and, more recently club DJ, whose autobiography bore the title *I Was A Robot*, locates the flesh and blood in techno and synthpop rhythms, winking with a winning display of self-awareness. *Electric Sheep*, with DJ Carl Cox and electronic duo U96, even ribs its own hoary title.

A raft of guests queue to express their fandom, from Midge Ure on the direct, dynamic *Das Beat* to New Order's Peter Hook (bringing bass to that song about Brum). MAPS and Juan Atkins also join the party, which for all its exuberance doesn't neglect to satirise the here and now, as on *Best Buy*. With abundant swing and pizzazz, *Magazine 1* gleams with topical heat to match Flür's creative longevity. **CR**

HELD BY TREES

Solace TWEED JACKET MUSIC

Instrumental project rekindles the spirit of Talk Talk to startling effect.

An undisguised homage to the sound and style of latter-period Talk Talk, David Joseph's Held By Trees project reassembles many of the musicians that Mark Hollis used on *Spirit Of Eden*, *Laughing Stock* and his 1998 solo album, and applies a similar working method, with the players encouraged to improvise around Joseph's guide tracks. Those albums have given rise to an entire genre in recent years, so it's an intriguing idea to go back to its roots in this way.

Next To Silence – a very Talk Talk title – opens to the sound of crows, its minimal touches of piano, cello and flute are like the first rays of sun breaking over the horizon. With its spare drumbeat, tremolo guitar and digressive clarinet, *In The Trees* comes perilously close to actually being a cover of *Ascension Day*, but is a joy nonetheless, while *Rain After Sun* and *Wave Upon Wave* emphasise that this music is as much about timbre and texture as it is about the notes.

It sometimes wanders into 80s adult rock territory and lacks the numinous mystery of Hollis and Talk Talk's albums, but *Solace* channels their psychedelic post-rock vibe to an almost eerie degree. **JB**

DAVID K JONES

Days In Corners WHOOP RECORDS

Gentle art rock from accomplished bassist and friends.

Having performed with Tim Bowness, Plenty and The Swan Chorus, in recent years, bassist David K Jones has proven himself a varied and skilled musician. His first solo LP, which refines material recorded more than two decades ago, showcases him as an equally capable songwriter. Its best song, *World Keeps Turning*, is a meditative ballad in which Bowness sings wistfully over a sparse piano and programmed percussion.

It's precisely this sort of haunting simplicity that allows tracks such as the uplifting *That Summer* and the John Wilkinson-led ode to Jeff Buckley, *Last Cigarette*, to be so appealing. It's not all softly spoken and downtrodden affairs, though, as a few other standouts are far more energetic and multilayered. Irresistible starter *Rescue Me* is even ripe with new age instrumentation and buoyancy, whereas the jazzier *Don't Go* makes great use of Jenny Whittaker's pained voice before the synth-heavy *Spin* adds electrified feistiness. A couple of less engaging and singular selections aside (namely, the cheesy *Crazy Rain* and *Footprints In The Sand*), *Days In Corners* is a touching and tasteful debut. **JMB**

BJØRN RIIS

Everything To Everyone KARISMA

Airbag man questions expectations on new solo outing.

With his fourth solo album, Airbag guitarist Bjørn Riis was prompted to explore conflicting emotions and how we deal with the "fear of losing oneself in the constant effort to meet every, often perceived, expectation". For fans of Airbag, the careful songwriting of that band's back catalogue and Riis' own solo output is present, along with his Floyd influences, in the 13 minutes of *Every Second Every Hour,* for instance.

> **There's a raw, organic, looser feel to some of the material here.**

The extended passages of sparse ambience that are part of Riis' regular arsenal haven't been ditched — there's plenty of space in long sections of *Lay Me Down*, throughout the acoustic guitar-based, reverb-drenched *Descending* and in the title track. However, although the album does much that would be expected of him in many respects, there's a more raw, organic, looser feel to some of the material here, in keeping with the idea of juggling messy feelings and contradictions. The fuzzed-up guitar sections of instrumental opener *Run* and the rockier second half of the title track help convey urgency and perhaps even exasperation. Meanwhile, the distinctly bluesy edge of marathon track *Lay Me Down* — apparently conceived as his attempt to write a ballad in the vein of early Whitesnake, of all bands — and the slow poignancy of *The Siren* help embody despondency, loss and a certain Scandinavian melancholy.

Aficionados of Riis' Steve Rothery- and David Gilmour-inspired lead work will have much to pore over. There are big solos in *Lay Me Down*, *Every Second Every Hour* and *Everything To Everyone,* and the slow lead break in the *The Siren* is straight from page one of the *Make Every Note Count Handbook*. As has been the case with previous solo projects, Riis is joined by a number of friends and collaborators including Airbag drummer Henrik Bergan Fossum, Wobbler bassist Kristian Hultgren, Oak's Simen Valldal Johannessen adds some keyboards, and also Norwegian singer-songwriter Mimmi Tamba. Although Riis' voice has a strong identity and his mid-register tones are excellent at channelling qualities of anxiety and vulnerability, Tamba's contributions are terrific and she adds depth as Riis' foil in a lovely dual lead vocal in the title track.

This isn't portentous symphonic rock or experimental electronica — for the most part the music here relies on fairly classic rock instrumentation, rich lead guitar work and warm keyboard sounds. It's designed primarily to communicate atmosphere, attitude and sentiment, acting as a reflection on common human dilemmas rather than to be technically flash or wilfully artful. A thoughtful, affective and effective album. **GARY MACKENZIE**

RADAR
FESTIVAL

... FRIDAY ... 29 JULY	... SATURDAY ... 30 JULY	... SUNDAY ... 31 JULY

PROG STAGE ONE

FRIDAY 29 JULY

leprous

HUMANITY'S LAST BREATH

CAR BOMB

DEVIL SOLD HIS SOUL

DAVID MAXIM MICIC

WOLF CULTURE

SATURDAY 30 JULY

HAKEN

intervals

bossk

CONJURER

SHOKRAN

SIAMESE

COLD NIGHT FOR ALLIGATORS

EL MOONO

SUNDAY 31 JULY

DIRTY LOOPS

··· FIRST EVER UK PERFORMANCE ···

PLINI

HACKTIVIST

UNPROCESSED

THE DALI THUNDERING CONCEPT

PALM READER

TIME, THE VALUATOR

PHOXJAW

BOILEROOM STAGE TWO

FRIDAY 29 JULY

JAKUB ZYTECKI

Nick Johnston

PRESS TO MECO

VIRIDITAS

ENTRO-P

ICARUS DIVE

LAST HYENA

SATURDAY 30 JULY

SECRET HEADLINER

CREAM

THECITYISOURS

TIBERIUS

BLACK ORCHID EMPIRE

SERTRALINE

FORAGER

YOU WIN AGAIN

GRAVITY

SUNDAY 31 JULY

Our Hollow, Our Home

CAGE FIGHT

POLY-MATH

P.U.L.S.E

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AIF MEMBER

LALU

Paint The Sky FRONTIERS

French keyboard wizard finds his prog sweet spot.

With *Paint The Sky*, Vivien Lalu moves away from the prog metal of his eponymous act's first two albums, *Atomic Ark* and *Oniric Metal*, towards more of a Trevor Rabin-era Yes sound and even progressive pop, but the result is by far and away his best work yet.

The concept behind the album involves humanity escaping a decaying planet and searching for a new Earth, and Lalu weaves his tale through a tapestry of gorgeous melodies and uplifting optimism. Lalu, on keys, is joined by a core group of Arena vocalist Damian Wilson, drummer Jelly Cardarelli and Joop Wolters on guitar and bass. Wilson sounds inspired throughout, totally engaged with the material, and this is a real showcase for his tone, range and ability to convey emotion.

Witness To The World recalls Tears For Fears with its earworm of a chorus and superb playing all round. *The Chosen Ones* is another high point, bristling with energy, featuring a fiery guest solo from Jordan Rudess, and an unexpectedly funky midsection. Hopefully the presence of big names like Wilson, Rudess, and Simon Phillips, who drums on the title track, will draw prog's fandom to *Paint The Sky*, because it's an absolute corker. **DW**

THE LAZY EYES

SongBook LUNATIC

Meet Australia's newest psychedelic sorcerers.

For anyone missing Tame Impala's early psychedelic rock ways, fellow Aussies The Lazy Eyes are here to scratch that itch. Self-recorded and self-produced, *SongBook* takes TI's *InnerSpeaker* vibe and switches it up with more complex compositions, tighter musicianship (no offence, young Kevin Parker) and clean, punchy production. The quartet's skills were honed by busking on Sydney's streets as teenagers so most tracks here catch the ear immediately, employing Queens Of The Stone Age motorik, King Gizzard melodics and satisfyingly heavy stoner grooves.

It's a colourful, multilayered record, full of cartoon imagery and escapism, with vocalist-guitarist-keyboardist Harvey Geraghty utilising the Syd Barrett rhyming dictionary on the sunny-ish *Nobody Taught Me. Where's My Brain?* is an undoubted homage to the Gizzard with its mischievous microtonal shimmy but the interesting thing is, as the record progresses, *SongBook* morphs into what could be lost Beatles tracks from *Sgt Pepper* or *Magical Mystery Tour*, such as the cracking *Imaginary Girl* and the unapologetically Macca piano ballad *Cheesy Love Song*. **JK**

MIDLAKE

For The Sake Of Bethel Woods BELLA UNION

Enigmatic Texans return from the wild.

Nine years have passed since Midlake's last album, *Antiphon*, which saw guitarist Eric Pulido assume leadership after the departure of original frontman Tim Smith.

The break has very much worked in the group's favour. *For The Sake Of Bethel Woods* is far less moribund than its predecessor. Although its subject matter is intensely personal: ruminations on the illness, passing of time and dying, the feel is one of great positivity. The album's cover is a picture of keyboard player Jesse Chandler's late father at the Woodstock Festival, hence the Bethel Woods of the album's title.

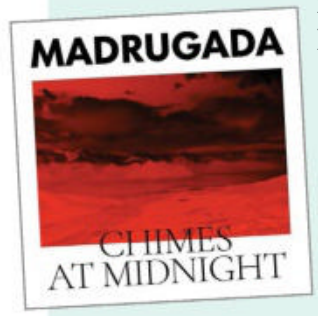
Producer John Congleton ensures this is the cleanest the group have ever sounded, without losing their mystery. The playing is exhilarating – *Feast Of Carrion* sounds like *Nursery Cryme*-era Genesis meeting Crosby, Stills & Nash and the hi-life guitar figure on *Glistening* is fabulous; Gone offers a wonky prog-funk that evokes *The Old And The Young* from *Antiphon*. For those waiting for *Van Occupanther II*, *... Bethel Woods* comes pretty close. There's little flab here; it has enough shadowy pastoralism to keep old fans on board, and a pop-prog sensibility to pique the interest of newcomers. **DE**

ART ROCK

Chris Roberts samples the new releases on the prog/rock boundary.

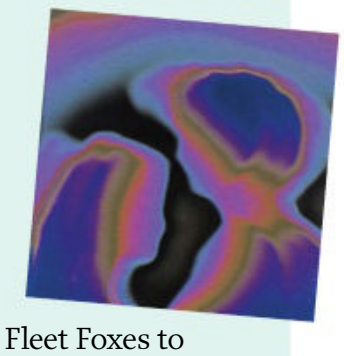
There's an uncontrived suspense, a latency, within the music of **Modern Studies** that is ineffably potent. That element makes their compelling conjuring hard to describe. On the surface, with their twinned male/female voices and folk rock stylings, they sound like Richard and Linda Thompson if that pair embraced a pinch of avant-jazz, or a lick of post-rock. The emotional tug driving the results, however, shifts their stoic sighs into another dimension. *We Are There* (Fire) is the fourth album from the Scotland-Lancashire quartet and surely the one to finally woo a bigger audience. Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood swim the blue Nile. Class.

It's been 14 years since Norwegian cult rockers **Madrugada** released an album, just after guitarist Robert Buras died. There's been a slow-burn growth in appreciation for their dark, tender music since, and they return with *Chimes At Midnight* (Warner), recorded at Sunset Sound with Kevin Ratterman (Flaming Lips). Sivert Hoyem's baritone is as bruised yet buoyant as ever — you may have heard it on Scandi noir-themed songs in intervening years — and while they now move at a stately, philosophical pace, sometimes Americanised, they still evoke that sexy, brooding atmosphere, like Leonard Cohen fronting one of the more pop-adjacent goth bands.



Talking of brooding, Nottingham's **Tindersticks** have always been its dons, as if their motto were mope over hope. Thirty years since becoming unlikely press darlings, their career has taken in 13 albums and multiple film scores as the arthouse auteurs of melancholy indie. *Past Imperfect: The Best Of Tindersticks '92–'21* (City Slang) celebrates the bittersweet with shrewd selections and a new song *Both Sides Of The Blade*, which flutters feyly.

The fourth from New Zealander **Aldous Harding**, *Warm Chris* (4AD), is infectiously mesmerised by its own curious twitches. She doesn't make it easy for the listener, skipping between twee and cryptic, but with John Parish producing (and a bizarre cameo from Sleaford Mods' Jason Williamson) there's spasmodic charm.



A more consistent allure permeates the debut albums from Dutch dreampop duo **Maida Rose**, *Tales Of Adolescence* (Believe). Influenced by Beach House and Cigarettes After Sex, as well as writers from Blake to Murakami, they haven't reinvented the wheel but placed beguilingly wobbly stabilisers on it.

When J Tillman left Fleet Foxes to become **Father John Misty**, he surely didn't expect his confessionals to take off as they did. His vivid, imaginative fifth under the persona, *Chloe And The Next 20th Century* (Bella Union), with Jonathan Wilson co-producing superbly, swerves between lounge jazz and romantic reveries (think Garfunkel/Nilsson). It'd be insufferably clever if it wasn't so brilliant and moving.

18+

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SUSANNA

Elevation SUSANNASONATA

Devout homage finds the light in the poet of darkness.

Susanna Wallumrød is evidently a huge fan of French poet Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821–1867), who was described by Proust as the greatest poet of his century and whose musings on sex, death, morality and melancholy scandalised his time. He was also big on finding beauty among the darkness, and it seems to be that strain of his work that the Norwegian singer is tapping into. *Elevation* isn't afraid to probe under some clammy rocks and delve into murky, gloomy areas; it's on a mission to locate the light, which shines all the brighter for acknowledging its transience.

> **It floats into a similar area to that inhabited by Kate Bush's *Aerial*.**

This is her second bonding session with the author of *Les Fleurs Du Mal*. Last year's *Baudelaire & Piano* did what it said on the tin, presenting her singing his lines solo over her piano playing. Now, however, there's a more concerted attempt to evoke his world through sound. Taped effects, rumbles and hisses, summon up the sinister between songs, sometimes giving the impression that My Bloody Valentine are — very gently, by their standards — soundchecking in the next room each time Susanna takes a breath. Her vocals (in English) and piano still take the lead roles, for the most part, but this is an album that aspires to the state of being a story, even a film, rather than a set of sad ballads.

'All is beauty', she sings on the centrepiece and six-minute stand-out *Invitation To The Voyage* (one of Baudelaire's most famous poems). The conclusion swoons for an escape to *'richness, serenity and pleasure'*. That translation may bother some literature graduates but catches the general direction of travel of the poet's reveries. *Alchemy Of Suffering* is as intense and hypnotic as Nico, and elsewhere, while timbres and tones in the voice bring to mind Joni Mitchell or Throwing Muses' Kristin Hersh, the sheer focus of Susanna's devotion to these interpretations ensures she sounds only like herself. *Rose-Pale Dawn* is a vocal-free experiment in buzzes, scratches and what might be a flickering radio dial — the soundscapes are by Stina Stjern, who collaborated on Susanna's 2019 Hieronymus Bosch-inspired project *Garden Of Earthly Delights* — while *Elevation* itself floats in a similar ether to that inhabited by Kate Bush's *Aerial*. Her emotional emissions come from a minimal orchestra nowadays, but are still in frequent dialogue with the magical.

As a conversation with Baudelaire it's bookish and bespectacled, interested solely in his writings, and a different admirer might have productively engaged with his colourful, dandy-ish, doomed life story. Yet the — to bastardise his work — heavenly nectars and boundless space here are purifying.

CHRIS ROBERTS

MWWB

The Harvest NEW HEAVY SOUNDS

Newly abbreviated cosmic doom crew deliver big riffs and synths.

Wrexham's MWWB – formerly Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard – have made a name for themselves as purveyors of cosmic doom, their titanic guitars adorned with Hawkwind-esque electronica and Jessica Ball's wraith-like voice. Their fourth album – recorded as Covid took hold but delayed after guitarist Paul 'Dave' Davies almost died from the effects of the disease – pushes further out into the void, with the longer, heavier songs alternating with more experimental tracks.

The ominous drone of *Obłok Magellana* establishes a cinematic SF vibe before the title track crashes in on a rollicking space rock riff, Ball's ethereal sprechgesang blooming into an ascendant chorus. The chug of *Logic Bomb* is the highlight of the guitar-driven songs, its riff contrasting intriguingly with a robotic yet strangely indie-ish vocal. But perhaps the best is *Let's Send The Bastards Whence They Came*, its looping synths and Mellotron choir producing a galactic rhapsody.

There are times when the arrangements feel a little undercooked and Ball's voice is crushed by the mix, but *The Harvest* is testament to a thriving, modern space rock scene. **JB**

NUCLEUS

Live At The BBC REPERTOIRE

CD treasure trove of UK jazz-rock pioneers.

Although undergoing numerous changes in personnel, the one constant force within Nucleus was trumpeter Ian Carr. His vision of escaping the conservative confines of the late 60s UK jazz scene pushed him to collaborate with like-minded radicals to create a sound that eagerly incorporated some elements of underground rock.

Covering their radio sessions from 1970 through to the early 90s, this album ultimately documents Carr's development as a composer. Initially reliant on future Soft Machinist Karl Jenkins' writing, Carr's confidence in scoring ambitious long-form suites audibly grows, as do punchy yet elegant themes channelled through dynamic small-scale groupings.

The constraints that come with radio slots ensure these performances waste no time achieving lift-off. Guitarists Chris Spedding and Allan Holdsworth dazzle, and sax player Brian Smith is outstanding. Later iterations of Nucleus and Carr-led outfits, often overlooked in favour of the early 'classic period', are just as convincing. Full session details and an authoritative overview from Nucleus scholar Roger Farbey complete a comprehensive account of a band in full flow. **SS**

OMEGA POINT

A Great Escape ROK MUSIC

Ex-The Reasoning/Ghost Community bassist returns with new project.

Omega Point, the new musical venture of Matthew Cohen, could prove to be a creative tipping point for the erstwhile bassist with Magenta, The Reasoning and Ghost Community. Cohen has surrounded himself with Ghost Community vocalist John Paul Vaughan, plus guitarist Paul Davies and keyboard player Rob Wilsher and The Reasoning drummer Vinden Wylde to deliver a work of maturity and depth.

The six songs are endowed with a soulfulness embedded in a rich tapestry of thoughtful, immersive prog musicianship. At their heaviest, Omega Point's rock sensibilities hint at Rush but, for the most part, inhabit a plane of emotion and sensitivity. Short, sweet opener *Hourglass* aside, each song is framed with cascading keyboards and a monolithic rhythm section, while *Thank You* features some sustained guitar breaks. Vaughan even holds an impossibly long note on the panoramic title track.

Confident, compelling and composed, *A Great Escape* is a real team effort, and the musical alchemy between the musicians is palpable. Cohen's assured and polished production further elevates it into a stand-out debut. **AR**

PARTNER

Green To Gold X! RECORDS

Canterbury-loving Chicago experimentalists push the comfort boundaries.

Anyone tuned into the Chicago psychedelic scene might have come across psych drone trio Moonrises, featuring drummer Ben Billington and keyboardist Libby Ramer. Recorded in 2014-15 but only released now, *Green To Gold* sees Ramer and Billington scratch their Canterbury itch under the guise of Partner, joined by saxophonist Christmas Woods and bassist Alex Nova, with some quite challenging results.

The artwork concept signals their intent: an art nouveau-ish Two Of Cups tarot theme flagging "emotional exchange and harmony from disparate parts". And from the first notes of *Drang* a dissonant, jazzy stall is set out, Ramer's Rhodes-work recalling parts of Soft Machine's *Fourth* and *Fifth*, with blasts of early Van der Graaf too. It's a live feel, everything high-in-the-mix, and dissonance rules supreme. Woods takes little care to harmonise, flexing some hard Elton Dean riffing, and vocals from Ramer and guest Whitney Johnson plateau on blue notes that border on being flat. Dissonance works best against melodic relief and there's not much of that here, but fans of the hard Canterbury catalogue will be delighted. **JK**

PATTERN-SEEKING ANIMALS

Only Passing Through INSIDEOUT

Third time is definitely the charm for US proggers.

Pattern-Seeking Animals' third album sees the Spock's Beard-connected band taking further definite strides in forging something of an individual band identity beyond the more obvious comparisons.

I Can't Stay Here Anymore boasts a spiky intro, Dave Meros' growling insistent bass and a Genesis-esque mid-section, which contrasts with the neo-prog-meets-spaghetti-western stylings of *Said The Stranger*. *Much Ado*'s groovy guitar riffing and the funk-rock leaning chorus of *I'm Not Alright* add further colour and variation. The band take modern prog tropes and toy with them, as evidenced by the 13-minute *Time Has A Way* with its bass and keyboard interplay, mariachi horns and Jimmy Keegan throwing in some drum theatrics.

With singer Ted Leonard's voice and Meros' bass providing aural threads, Pattern-Seeking Animals embrace a variety of styles and sounds, not least via founder John Boegehold's multi-layered keyboard parts. It delivers on many fronts – accessible odd-times, pop-friendly hooks, clever instrumentation, well-crafted arrangements and a clean production. Very possibly the band's best album yet. **GMM**

ROBERT REED

The Ringmaster: Part Two TIGERMOTH

"The new Oldfield" gets (back) in the ring.

It's no act of provocation to say Robert Reed's music sounds like Mike Oldfield's. It's kind of the point. With Tom '*Tubular Bells*' Newman co-producing and Les Penning featured, he's recreating the landscapes first viewed on *Hergest Ridge* and *Ommadawn*.

The latest in Welshman Reed's follow-up flow to his *Sanctuary* series comes just months after *The Ringmaster: Part One*. Essentially, Reed and crew came up with so much music that the project was best divided to give listeners the chance to digest the first part. This second half kicks off with the nine-minute *Song Of Healing Light*, which rather splendidly manages to reference every phase (and guitar tone) of Oldfield's 70s sound. *The Hat* is a likeable, light-touch instrumental, while Angharad Brinn provides enchanting vocals on the cleverly arranged *Sendlinger's Song*.

The concept of *The Ringmaster* (both parts) involves the creative muse, and how it can encourage or discourage, deliver one day or deny the next. It's safe to say it's delivered regularly to Reed, his ongoing tributes to Oldfield now becoming a river of dignity and delight in their own right. **CR**

PROGRESSIVE FOLK

Paul Sexton travels from Sonoma to Sweden in the latest bucolic grab-bag.

Picture the scene. **Lia Ices**, pregnant with her first child, walks from her house on Moon Mountain in Sonoma, Northern California, through a rose garden with an orchard to her studio, and makes what becomes her aptly named *Family Album* (Natural Music). Independently released and her first since 2014's *Ices*, this attractive set, subsequently recorded at three Californian studios with producer JR White, has many shades of 1970s singer-songwriter intimacy, especially on its piano-based opening tracks. It expands onto a vista of unforced bohemia, notably in audio journals such as *Young On The Mountain* and on the understated psychedelia of *Anywhere At All*; this is an album that more than reflects its idyllic setting.

A few thousand miles from Sonoma – in South Yorkshire, to be precise – **Kate Green** brings her own experience to *A Dark Carnival* (kategreenmusic.com), all of 15 years since the acclaim that greeted *An Unkindness Of Ravens*. Made with Radio 2 Folk Award-nominated producer Jed Grimes, it's carefully crafted both from outside sources, on songs by originals as varied as Lal Waterson and Memphis Minnie, as well as Green's own compositions. From the arresting opener *Lady Diamond* onwards, this is a confident reimagining of the folk tradition, refreshing and sometimes funny, as on Green's withering castigation of corporate greed, *Renegades Of Love* (*'We'll drag you through your hedge fund'*). Her recasting of Minnie's *When The Levee Breaks* – yes, that one, Zeppelin fans – is worth the price of admission on its own.

Raine Hamilton, up in Winnipeg, is described as "part prairie songstress, part storyweaver," and her *Brave Land* (rainehamilton.com) delivers decisively on the promise of her 2018 recognition as Emerging Artist at the Canadian Music Folk Awards. Anything and everything in this neck of the musical woods gets tagged with the "Joni" comparison, but there's more of a Natalie Merchant tinge to a voice nevertheless very much Raine's own. Like the Lia Ices record, the songs are as sparsely beautiful as their rural habitat, as the classically trained violinist leads a string trio delicately offset with acoustic guitar. The opening *Love Has Come For Me* has extra singalong potential, too.

The sixth album by Swedish tunesmith **Sofie Livebrant**, *Weep The Time Away* (Rootsy Music), has her reaching back almost 200 years for inspiration. Livebrant has set eight classic poems by Emily Brontë to her own new music and vocals. It's striking that a Scandinavian musician would be galvanised, during the confinements of lockdown, by such a distinctly English literary tradition, especially as this record bases itself in the folk tradition. Opening with *Mayflower*, it expands into refreshingly eclectic innovation in the off-kilter sonics of *Deep Deep Down In The Silent Grave* and the infectious *There Was A Time*. Yet despite the disconnect, the results are arrestingly graceful.

TANGERINE DREAM

Raum KSCOPE/EASTGATE MUSIC

Statement of intent from ever-evolving krautrock veterans.

Back in the early 70s, Edgar Froese was a visionary musician. A visual artist as well as a musical one, he wanted the music he made with Tangerine Dream to have a quality he called "transparency", and throughout that decade they produced a groundbreaking series of electronica releases, including the ineffably mysterious *Atem* and *Zeit* and the pulsing cosmic travelogues of *Phaedra* and *Ricochet*.

> **It nods respectfully back to the past, while heading to the future.**

From the mid-80s onwards, Tangerine Dream simplified their approach, churning out a series of albums of big shiny, glossy tunes, but by the 2000s, the line-up of Froese, Thorsten Quaeschning, Ulrich Schnauss, and violinist Hoshiko Yamane had evolved to give Tangerine Dream a new creative impetus. They recognised the evocative, painterly style that made the group great in the first place, marrying sleek digital rhythms with a layered textural sound.

Froese passed away in 2015, but 2017's *Quantum Gate* — the groups 30th-ish studio album — was based on his musical sketches and was made with his blessing. For *Raum*, the new Tangerine Dream had access to his sound archive from 1977 to 2013, thus maintaining the group's sonic continuity. There are even misty wisps of Mellotron flute on *Along The Canal*, a callback to a previous era.

Raum has a warmer, more immersive feel than its predecessor, with electronic currents flowing organically around the rhythmic components. The 19-minute *In 256 Zeichen* begins with abstract ambience, then takes on a more concrete form, before segueing into a repetitive violin section and then onto Quaeschning's kaleidoscopic sequencers and ticking electronic beats. Now he's effectively the musical director and has no intention of going back to having distractions like saxophone, guitar and percussion in the live line-up. Yamane doesn't sound like she's playing much, but then her violin and viola are heavily treated. They are joined by new member Peter Frick, the first TD musician never to have met Froese. If his presence is symbolic of the baton being passed on to a new generation, *Raum* also feels like an affectionate homage.

The new line-up seems to have got the balance just right of nodding respectfully back to the past, while heading off towards the future. They achieve an irresistible momentum on the title track, and on the slower moments such as *You're Always On Time*, which includes some of their field recordings, there is a lightness about the rhythm and a mobility to the melody, which is based on some sweet chord changes. Edgar would surely have approved.

MIKE BARNES

MICHAEL ROMEO

War Of The Worlds, Pt 2 INSIDEOUT

Weapons-grade prog metal from Symphony X virtuoso.

The first part of Michael Romeo's *War Of The Worlds* endeavour was one of 2018's most joyous surprises. Although close enough to the all-out prog metal attack of the guitarist's Symphony X day job to justify the indulgence of a solo detour, it was also intermittently bonkers, with diversions through extravagant orchestral pomp and even bursts of dubstep on the curiously titled *Fucking Robots*.

War Of The Worlds, Pt 2 is every bit as eccentric, explosive and packed with classy and thunderous prog metal anthems as its predecessor. Introducing himself with a tour-de-force of gritty and soulful wailing, Croatian vocalist Dino Jelusick replaces Rick Castellano, and gives everything a rougher and bluesier edge, even as Romeo is moving through his usual virtuoso gears. *Divide And Conquer*, *Metamorphosis* and *Parasite* are the pick of the more straightforward tracks, but it's the intricate and eccentric *Hybrids* and the monochrome high drama of the epic *Maschinemensch* that will send fans of artful shred into orbit.

This is the perfect follow-up to one of Romeo's most impressive flights of fancy. Part three? Go on then. **DL**

SHADOW UNIVERSE

Subtle Realms, Subtle Worlds MONOTREME

Slovenian duo's poignant post-rock explorations.

Subtle Realms, Subtle Worlds picks up naturally from 2018's *Speaking For Clouds*, offering a unified and daring set of tracks that quickly earn their place alongside the best material from such stylistic siblings as God Is An Astronaut, Maybeshewill and Russian Circles.

Each piece exudes a wide-ranging and cinematic persona, beginning with the temperamental and neoclassical *Organism*. Its gloomy piano notes evoke the opening of Opeth's *My Arms, Your Hearse*, and the ways in which it moves around that motif with volatile syncopation and belligerent guitar riffs is great. It ebbs and flows between anger and remorse masterfully, as do the slightly more rustic *Hymn For The Giants* and the spacier *Antares Goes Supernova. Don't Look At It And You'll See It* is less erratic because it's blanketed in violins and faint percussion makes it a highly unsettling, if subtle, composition.

Although it's also melancholic in spots, closer *Season Of Eternal Maze* ultimately comes across like the hopeful light at the end of a tumultuous tunnel. It's a lovely way to cap off what's surely among the most striking post-rock releases in recent memory. **JMB**

SOFT MACHINE

Facelift France & Holland CUNEIFORM

Out-bloody-rageous live rarities from Softs.

The extent to which Soft Machine were racing ahead of the creative curve is brilliantly illustrated in this enthralling two-CD/one-DVD archive set. Containing a previously unreleased soundboard concert from Amsterdam and audio and live footage from Paris in 1970, it captures the short-lived quintet formation on whip-cracking form.

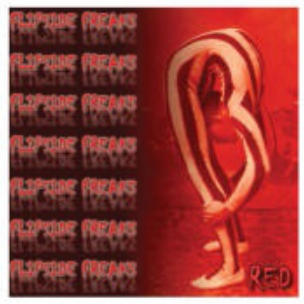
Augmenting what would become the regular grouping of Wyatt, Hopper, Ratledge and Dean, Lyn Dobson's sax, flute and occasional scat vocalising lends an already adrenaline-charged setlist a boisterous vitality. There's an abundance of energy, as fuzz-driven organ meshes with buzzsaw bass and furious drumming. Cerebral time signatures are thrashed out at a velocity that sometimes leaves the twin saxes playing catch-up.

These sets contain several pieces from the soon-to-be recorded *Third* album being tried and tested sometimes in embryonic form. Especially exciting is the inclusion of Hugh Hopper's rarely heard *12/8 Theme*. Digging deep into the porous intersections between rock and jazz, composition and freeform expression, nobody else on the rock or jazz scene at the time sounds like Soft Machine. **SS**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Flipside Freaks: Red FLICKNIFE

Low-key psych jamboree.



Harking back to the days when label comps were the easiest way to discover a ton of new music, Flicknife Records have conjured a endearingly shambolic gem. Showcasing a gaggle of garage, space rock and psychedelic acts, all of whom hail from a few fathoms beneath the mainstream radar, *Flipside Freaks: Red* somehow deigns to flow like a proper studio album.

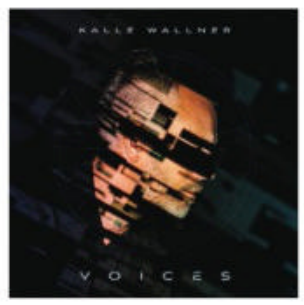
Most of it is brilliant, too. Sula Bassana's *Lost In Space* is a sublime piece of motorik acid rock, with a belligerent undertow; Symbiotic's *The Approach* brings together bongos, acoustic guitar and what sounds like someone throat singing in a wheely bin, with compelling results. Onetime Hawkwind bassist Mr Dibs' eponymous outfit evoke both his old group and The Soft Boys, as they hurtle down a swirling, fuzz-filled tunnel. Bucking the trend, Astral Magic deftly channel the Electric Prunes and Che Macello's *Spark* has a slack-jawed electro-country feel to it.

Best of the lot, another Hawkwind alumnus Nigel Potter reaffirms his connection to the intergalactic mainframe with *Last To Leave*'s eight minutes of floored-accelerator space rock militancy. Weird, wild and well worth going into orbit for. **DL**

KALLE WALLNER

Voices GENTLE ART OF MUSIC

Moody music from RPWL's guitar slinger.



Kalle Wallner takes a busman's holiday from German prog mainstays RPWL with this largely instrumental solo outing containing seven songs, titled from *One* to *Seven. Out*. RPWL started life as a Pink Floyd tribute band and there's certainly a Floydian melancholy herein.

Like Gilmour, Wallner is a tasteful and restrained player, weaving out languid, bluesy lines, maintaining the focus on conjuring emotions and building mood rather than busting chops. He also handles bass, keys and programming, assisted on the latter two by RPWL bandmate Yogi Lang, and joined by the ever-dependable Marco Minnemann on drums. Arno Menses, from the band Subsignals, contributes the album's sole lead vocal on *Three*, a punchy if tonally downbeat rocker, and while the album's overall mood is introspective, Wallner paints with a range of colours. *Four* boasts weight and stomp in the main riff but switches into a trippy space rock diversion at the midpoint, while *SIX* dances between a dreamy ambience and upbeat sections energised by Wallner's buzzing slide guitar. A compelling, finely crafted solo debut. **DW**

WOLVERINE

A Darkened Sun SENSORY

Swedish modernists put their soundtrack to plastic.

The soundtrack to Wolverine's 2020 short film of the same name, *A Darkened Sun* deserves to be reassessed in its audio-only form. A conceptual suite about a young woman's existential battles, these four songs showcase the ongoing refinement of the Swedes' sound, with the metallic oomph of old dialled down a notch.

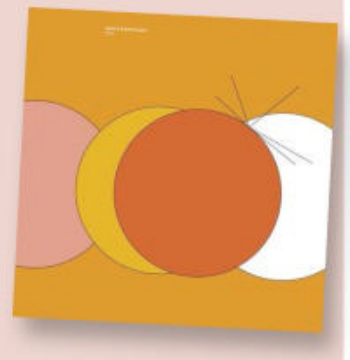
In keeping with music that was designed to accompany striking but unfathomable visuals, opening epic *Phoenix Slain* is a lesson in subtlety and ingenuity, as vocalist Stefan Zell's baritone becomes entwined in an ever-changing but emotionally glacial landscape. *The Breach* is more conventional: mid-paced and stately, it welds twinkling ambience and wheezy Mellotron to a metallic chassis. In contrast, *Dead As The Moon* is a delicate folk rock waltz that spirals toward a Mogwai-like crescendo. A fitting climax *Hibernator* is simply a sublime modern prog song, infused with Wolverine's textural trademarks but sharper and catchier than anything they have released before.

Although still best experienced in tandem with the movie, this is so sonically rich and potent that a rebirth on vinyl seems wholly apt. **DL**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Self-described "spaced-out, instrumental lounge rock outfit" **Action & Tension & Space** serve a cocktail of sounds on their sumptuous fourth album, *Tellus* (Rune Grammofon). Kraut and post-rock vibes, Mellotron moments and acoustic jazz flavours imbue tracks including *Schweppes And Koskenkorva* and *The Last Petrol Station Before Hardangervidda*. This is easy listening, prog style.



UK duo **Court Lake Zephyr** wear their golden-era influences on their sleeve on their second release. Ian Grove and Nigel Mervyn reckon their promising *03* (courtlakezephyr.uk) is best enjoyed with "a high-quality set of headphones and wine/beer/whisky", but booze isn't really necessary to absorb the melodic ideas, clever twists and meaningful lyrics abounding on this likeable slice of homespun prog.

Germany's **Soulsplitter** set out their stall in 2019 with debut record *Salutogenesis*, and second album *Connection* (soulsplitter.com) is another earnest genre-blurring selection. With djenty, mathy and old-school prog moments, they combine mind-boggling guitar, huge choruses and chamber strings, with Sami Gayed's emotive vocals sealing them as a real prospect.

Saga's Michael Sadler and star keyboardist Derek Sherinian are among the guests on the self-titled debut by collective **Guild Of Others** (Louder Than Loud). This is more broad-minded rock than full-on prog, but the group have a way with an intelligent, arena-friendly hook, and the likes of guitarist Steve Potts and bassist Tony Franklin are high-pedigree players.

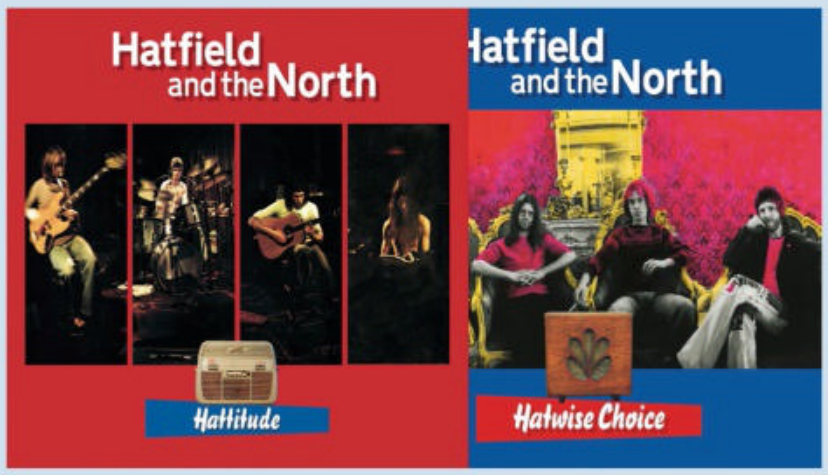
Vast Conduit is the Californian prog ensemble led by keyboardist/vocalist Bill Jenkins (Enchant, Thought Chamber), and their strong debut, *Always Be There* (vastconduit.com), is pretty splendid in parts, with sparkling pianos and keys, violins and trumpets. Those mitochondrial threads of golden-age British prog are here, but supplied with that American, Spock's Beard-y gloss. The poignant theme of parenthood only deepens this muso experience.

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, New Jersey's experimental prog fusioneers **Guesstimate** unveil their own promising debut, *Fortune Hunters* (guesstimatemusic.bandcamp.com). The quartet's textured, seemingly improvised approach nods to Mahavishnu and 70s-era Miles Davis, with Taylor Garcia's horns adding a jazz mood to the band's hazy, psych-soaked rock noodlings.

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH

Hatwise Choice/Hattitude HATCO CD/BURNING SHED

Two treasure chests of Canterbury gold.



In 1980, five years after Hatfield And The North had gone their separate ways, grieving fans of the quartet were briefly cheered when Virgin released *Afters*. An uneven compilation that mostly features tracks from their self-titled debut and *The Rotters' Club*, it did at least throw in a couple of rare live tracks.

As welcome as such in-concert morsels were *Afters* completely failed to sate the appetite of those who fondly

> **A detailed portrait of what the Hatfields were all about.**

recalled the group's brilliant onstage chemistry and their legendary Radio 1 appearances. Notwithstanding the furtive activities of tape traders, and later, the emergence of the internet, if you wanted anything 'official' from that aspect of the group this was the thin gruel being served.

This state of affairs perhaps goes some way to explain the unconfined joy that greeted the release of 2005's *Hatwise Choice* and *Hattitude* the following year. Brimming with live and radio appearances from between 1973-1975, along with extensive commentary from band members in the expansive and entertaining sleeve notes, they act almost as a kind of audio documentary providing a much more detailed portrait of what the Hatfields were all about.

As accomplished as the two albums released during their time together were, these collections shift the focus onto the harder edge that manifested on stage. Stripped of the refinements afforded by overdubs, there's a bracing rawness to tracks as they gallop over pieces of inordinate intricacy with a kind of bullish determination to get to the other side. As they career between avant-garde freak-outery, snatches of heavy rock rifferama, woozy abstraction, and soaring singalong melodies, sometimes all within the space of a single piece, it all makes for a sensationally gutsy ride. While Dave Stewart's keyboards and Phil Miller's guitar are often designed to be deliberately cutting and astringent, another essential part of the Hatfields' sound and appeal rests in the unfeigned tenderness of bassist Richard Sinclair's mellifluous vocals, very much acting as the calm in the jazz-rock storm.

Alongside all their knotty compositions, in concert, the band were enormous fun, frequently peppering their sets with self-deprecating humour. Dave Stewart could always get a sceptical crowd on-side with a rousing high-speed rendition of *The Laughing Policeman* while drummer Pip Pyle's orchestrated onstage crockery throwing always went down a storm. Happily, these moments, and several others, are caught on tape. This is Hatfield And The North in all their wild and sometimes wacky glory. Long out of print, it's so good to have them back.

SID SMITH

TIM BOWNESS & GIANCARLO ERRA

Memories Of Machines KSCOPE

Cultured collaboration, tweaked and re-titled.

There's been no shortage of soft-spoken, aesthetically pleasing Tim Bowness releases over the last decade, whether solo albums or collaborations. Yet this team-up with Nosound's Giancarlo Erra, here receiving a 10th anniversary reboot, remains among the finest. Bowness is an incomparably subtle and restrained singer, who consistently both sets and serves the pensive mood of the music he's drawn to, and here his knack of emoting massively without ever actually being seen to do anything as vulgar as emoting is demonstrated at its best. Erra's unfussy, insistent backdrops gel with him exquisitely.

A degree of rebranding happens herewith. The album originally came out as *Warm Winter* by Memories Of Machines. Now it's *Memories Of Machines* by Bowness and Erra. The Italian has remixed it, altering the arrangements and restoring edited tracks to full length. He's also allowed emphasis to fall on the textures, the rippling atmospheres, as much as the songs. It works. Two tracks are added: *Dreamless Days* and a reading of Nosound's *Someone Starts To Fade Away*, which sounds like its title. In truth, so does much of the album, which seeks to exist in the gaps between relationships, in the shadows between actions. It's like a Fernando Pessoa book magicked into music.

Multiple guests do their thing without upsetting the delicately poised applecart. Robert Fripp slips in soundscapes on *Lost And Found In The Digital World*, while Peter Hammill artfully plays guitars on *At The Centre Of It All*. There are backing vocals from All About Eve singer Julianne Regan on *Before We Fall* and *Change Me Once Again*, and Steven Wilson pops up on *Lucky You Lucky Me*. Frequent flyers on the Bowness express like Michael Bearpark, Peter Chilvers and Colin Edwin contribute too. Yet *Memories Of Machines*, as we must now call it, never sounds busy or crammed (especially on this mix), gliding serenely, with great purpose. It will warm your winter. **CR**

THE CORAL

The Coral RUN ON

Cosmic Scousers' Mercury Prize-nominated debut expanded.

The Coral formed at school in the late 90s at the tail end of Britpop, but by the time they recorded their self-titled debut in 2002, they were staking out their own territory. They shared some of the classic pop aspirations of their UK contemporaries, but they were more avowedly psychedelic.

The Coral was very much a 21st-century take on mind expansion, with disparate influences stir-fried together. The lyrics of *I Remember When* are a flashback to an acid trip: *'I remember when the sea froze over...'* sings James Skelly over a chord sequence borrowed from a Dr Dre tune and with Question Mark And The Mysterians-style organ lines, before it bursts out into a Cossack dance. On *Shadows Fall* the guitars shape a faux-reggae groove with enough space for Ennio Morricone guitar twangs and a sax-led jazzy mid-section.

The Coral purveyed an individual style that still sounds that way 20 years on and has its own strange but sophisticated logic. And the songwriting, as the Mercury nomination suggests, is top-notch. *Simon Diamond*, on which Skelly tells us that the titular character, *'Sold his soul/Changed his name by deed poll'* and ended up *'living in a nutshell'*, is as loopy as any slice 60s English psychedelia. The young Skelly was already possessed of a soulful rhythm and blues voice and on *Skeleton Key*, the title track of a 2002 EP, he channels Captain Beefheart. The drums patterns have a kinship with the Captain's *Electricity*, and there's enough room for a mid-section featuring pretty glockenspiel over monastic chorales.

This extraordinary debut is accompanied by a bonus disc of 15 B-sides and other rarities. It's as eclectic as one might expect, ranging from the bug-eyed, fuzz guitar-fuelled *Follow The Sun* to the acoustic strum, vocal harmonies and flute of *Another Turn In The Lock*, while the neo-Merseybeat *She's The Girl For Me* feels like a respectful nod back to Liverpool's most famous sons. **MB**

CRAFT

First Signs: The Definitive Edition SPIRIT OF UNICORN

The Enid alumni's lone, Zodiac-themed early 80s album reissued with extras.

William Gilmour and Martin Russell's spells in maverick symphonic proggers The Enid were short – a couple of years apiece. But it still gave them the platform to collaborate on their own instrumental project in the early 80s, which materialised as Craft after they joined forces with percussionist Grant McKay Gilmour. The fruits of their labours consisted of just one full album, but now this 1984 set has been rescued from the realm of obscure prog rarities and given a reissue with remixes and bonus tracks.

On first encounter, it has a striking and perhaps unfortunate characteristic in common with so many records made in the 1980s, namely its anachronistic production. Plumes of fretless bass are one thing, but date-stamped synthetic-sounding brass and over-treated guitars are no substitute for the kind of orchestral swells Craft's alma mater used to create. Yet dig deeper and other more enduring qualities come through – chiefly some superbly crafted instrumental passages and evocative mini-symphonies that suggest there was some serious potential here.

Each of the six original tracks are named after signs of the zodiac. *Leo*'s infectious synth riff is backed by muscular guitar, channelling the kind of AOR melodic appeal and soft rock aesthetics the likes of Yes and Asia favoured around that time. And while a couple of the meandering, jazzier passages verge on lift muzak, the pacey, dramatic thrust and irresistible keyboard hooks of *Gemini* are frequently captivating.

Better still are the previously unreleased tracks, suggesting Craft might have gone on to greater things: *Dmitri's Lament* softly parping electronic horns and military drums suggest an excerpt from a symphonic prog opera that never was, while *Despina* is graced by beautifully wintry piano building into a spellbinding Philip Glass-style soundscape.

They clearly saw something in their stars, and this offers of a tantalising glimpse could have transpired if they'd eventually aligned properly. **JS**

FAMILY

A Song For Me - Deluxe Edition CHERRY RED

The difficult third album for Roger Chapman's clan.

Despite garnering much acclaim for their first two studio records, Family arrived at album number three in a state of transition. Guitarist Rick Grech had fled the nest to join Blind Faith shortly after the release of 1969's *Family Entertainment*, while saxophonist/keyboardist Jim King was shown the door after his escalating drug use contributed to a calamitous US tour later that year.

Consequently, *A Song For Me* showcased a refreshed line-up, featuring new boys John Weider on bass and John "Poli" Palmer on flute, vibraphone and piano. New songs that had been debuted onstage required some rapid rearrangement to suit Family's subtly altered instrumentation. The result was an album that is rarely cited as the band's best, despite its numerous charms. More than half a century on, this remastered and generously augmented edition presents the record in the best possible light, with everything sounding crisp, clear and even more endearingly shambolic and organic than before.

With Roger Chapman on blistering form throughout, *A Song For Me* is one of the rowdiest Family albums. *Drowned In Wine* and the blissfully wonky *Wheels* shared plenty of raucous, roots rock DNA with previous album highlights, and the new line-up's freshly-minted chemistry ensured that everything else rattled along with tons of spiky energy. With everything from crestfallen ballads like *Stop For The Traffic - Through The Heart Of Me* to the jaunty bluegrass boogie of *The Cat And The Rat*, it remains a patchwork of bright ideas, rather than one complete, cogent statement. Nonetheless, Family never sounded more out-there and uncompromising than they did on the album's sprawling, amorphous title track; a lithe blues rock jam with violins set to stun and a real hint of danger.

With all its respective single B-sides and a full disc of BBC Radio Sessions, including wonderfully ragged and urgent live versions of 1993's *OK J* and *Songs For Sinking Lovers*, this breathes new life into an undervalued classic. **DL**

TWELFTH NIGHT

Smiling At Grief - Revisited TWELFTHNIGHT.INFO

Remixed vinyl reissue of diverse album from neo-prog innovators.

The first album that Twelfth Night made with Geoff Mann as their singer and lyricist, *Smiling At Grief* represented a major step forward for the band in terms of their sound and presentation. Issued 40 years ago on cassette, it's now getting a limited release on vinyl for the first time, but as the *Revisited* part of the title suggests, this is a remixed version of the album, with prog friends and peers – including longtime fan Steven Wilson – applying various

> **They remain neo-prog's most innovative band.**

degrees of polish to the tracks, from sonic tweaking to radical reworkings. The vinyl replicates the original track listing, while a CD version adds a series of additional mixes.

Made as an extended demo to attract record company interest, *Smiling At Grief* – a title taken from a line in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, naturally – saw the band experiment with a variety of styles. *East Of Eden* is a terrific opener, its pulsing synth bass, abrasive guitar and Mann's utterly distinctive voice combining to create a dynamic new wave rock song. Wilson's mix burnishes every hook to a fine sheen, and with industry backing at the time, this could have been a proper hit. Similarly catchy is the spiky alt-pop of *The Honeymoon Is Over*, with both mixes from Karl Groom and Andy Tillison punching up the chorus to glorious effect.

With its marching beat and chanted vocals, Rob Reed's mix of *Puppets* is cut from the post-punk left-field, while *Three Dancers* is positively new romantic with Wilson pushing Clive Mitten's funky 80s bass to the max – think Peter Hammill doing *Girls On Film*. Yet the song that undergoes the greatest transformation is downbeat ballad *Makes No Sense*, which Tim Bowness and Brian Hulse imaginatively re-record as urgent electro-noir, and Mark Spencer remakes as a powerful duet with Mann's original vocal.

Smiling At Grief also features early takes of *Creepshow* and *This City*, with Peter Jones' luminous mix of the latter emphasising that it's arguably superior to the *Fact And Fiction* version. *Creepshow* is still a song in development at this stage, though Paul Hodson does his best to bring out its spine-chilling atmosphere, and Mann's vocal is as disturbing as ever. Closing the album is a studio recording of live favourite *Für Helene Part II*, remixed here by Dean Baker, a showcase for Andy Revell's adventures in echoplex, its four-to-the-floor, Manuel Göttsching-esque groove being evidence of the band's krautrock roots.

Far from an exercise in mere nostalgia, *Smiling At Grief – Revisited* underlines why Twelfth Night remain neo-prog's most exciting and musically innovative band.

JOE BANKS

THE STORY OF ONE OF ROCK'S MOST UNDERRATED BANDS

From the making of such landmark albums as *Fragile*, *Close To The Edge* and *90125*, to up-close-and-personal interviews with Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman and the late, great Chris Squire, this is an epic tribute to one of the most influential prog bands of all time.

FUTURE

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HAWKWIND

Dreamworkers Of Time – The BBC Recordings 1985-1995 ATOMHENGE/ESOTERIC

Three-CD collection proves that the 80s weren't all bad.

Regardless of the political debate surrounding the BBC, what is indisputable is the venerable broadcasting institution's enduring ability to capture and curate the nation's culture for posterity. Who else would spend time recording someone as defiantly counter-cultural as Hawkwind?

The three CDs collected here focus on a time when Hawkwind's glory days were supposedly behind them. The 80s didn't do a lot of favours for artists whose origins began in the 60s, but Hawkwind were always masters of their own universe and here they're certainly rocking that bit harder than they had in the previous decade.

Of the two live shows presented here, Reading Festival on August 24, 1986 – broadcast on BBC Radio 1's *Friday Rock Show* – edges it over the *BBC Radio One In Concert* recording from London's Hammersmith Odeon on May 14, 1988 thanks to an intensity that only a festival – the band's natural habitat – can inspire. With a line-up featuring the ever-present Dave Brock alongside Huw Lloyd Langton (guitar, vocals), Harvey Bainbridge (keyboards, vocals), Alan Davey (bass, vocals) and Danny Thompson (drums), established favourites *Master Of The Universe* and *Assault And Battery* nestle comfortably with the then-contemporary *Needle Gun* to pulverise an evidently appreciative audience who later make their love felt when Lemmy arrives for an extended *Silver Machine*. The Hammersmith show finds Hawkwind spending less time looking over their collective shoulder as they focus on the then-released *The Xenon Codex* in the shape of *Wastelands Of Sleep* and *The War I Survived*.

Of the final disc of radio sessions, 1995's turn for Mark Radcliffe sees a truncated line-up wisely utilising their time at Maida Vale by fusing the likes of *Assassins Of Allah* with *The Dream Goes On* to conclude this righteous document. **JM**

JACK LANCASTER AND ROBIN LUMLEY

Marscape ESOTERIC

Saxophonist and Brand X keyboard player in search of space.

In 1975, Jack Lancaster and Robin Lumley recorded a rock version of Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf* with an all-star cast. A year later they turned their sights on Mars with this follow-up.

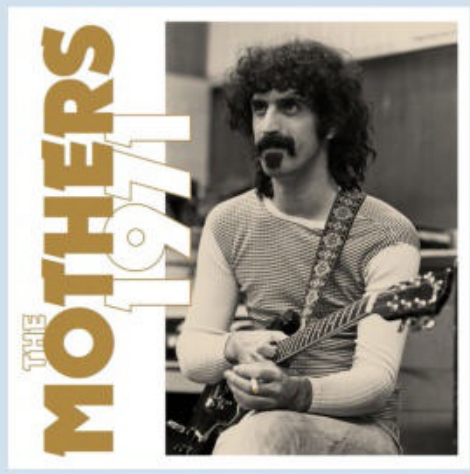
Here the pair are ably backed by bassist Percy Jones, guitarist John Goodsall, Morris Pert on percussion and Phil Collins on drums – Lumley's bandmates from Brand X – while Penguin Cafe Orchestra's Simon Jeffes also guests on koto. There's some musical overlap with Brand X, although only a few tracks come close to that band at full throttle, like *Sail On Solar Wind*, which is urged on by Collins' speedy hi-hat and tom rolls. They were always one of jazz rock's more melodic groups, largely due to Lumley's compositional input and sweet sounding synth tone, and *Phobos And Deimos* shares a theme with Brand X's *Kugelblitz*. Lancaster's saxophones are used sparingly and he also plays the Kaleidophon (an electric wind instrument) and flute. *Olympus Mons* comes close to how Brand X might have sounded with Lancaster on sax, but with a middle section of water gongs and cascading piano. Goodsall lets rip here and Percy Jones' fretless bass still sounds like no one else. Collins plays some spectacular breaks and ends the track with an avalanche of tom-toms.

Some of the album's most affecting moments find the duo exploring quite different avenues, such as Lumley's exquisite piano miniature *Arrival* and the dancing figures of *Homelight* with Goodsall on acoustic guitar and Lancaster on violin. *With A Great Feeling Of Love: Inner Warmth And Feelings Of Affinity* is a sensual keyboard-and-sax meditation, and they embark on a bizarre synth-led cosmic skank on *Hopper* (the reissue's bonus tracks are single versions of each, although unsurprisingly neither became hits). Lancaster plays flute and pan-pipes on the quirky *Blow Holes (The Pipes Of Mars)*, exemplifying the fact that the musicians are having fun on Marscape rather than just fashioning a furrow-browed musical evocation of the Red Planet. **MB**

FRANK ZAPPA

The Mothers 1971 ZAPPA/UME

Zappa's full Fillmore East stand and more get the box set treatment.



While the hastily released, bootleg-sleeved *Fillmore East – June 1971* album has provided Frank Zappa's multitudinous detractors with an ever-reliable stick with which to beat him for the last five decades, brimming as it is with an excess of tiresome prurience masquerading as edgy humour which is at best tedious, at worst indefensibly misogynistic, it certainly didn't have to be that way, as this eight-CD box set proves.

> **Zappa is on top form guitar-wise across the truly inspired improv.**

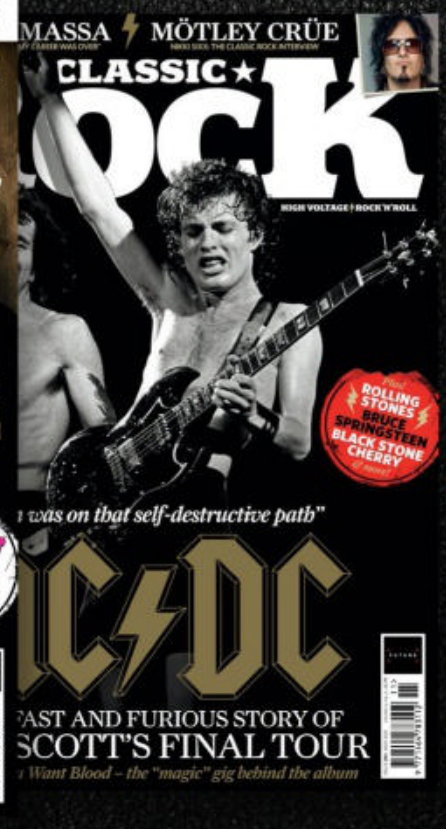
All four New York Fillmore shows – recorded over two nights – that provided source material for the original album are included here, and a glance at the setlist reveals that Zappa was positively spoilt for choice when programming the record. Not least four versions of the epic *Billy The Mountain* that range in length from 30 to 36 minutes (obviously impractically lengthy in the vinyl age, but considering the original LP bafflingly split *Willie The Pimp* over two sides, a not insurmountable problem). There are a couple of nifty encore assaults on *King Kong* that both feature guesting original Mother Don Preston on keys grappling manfully with Zappa (inarguably on top form guitar-wise) across the Fillmore shows' finest slices of tangibly intense and truly inspired improv. Also on the cutting room floor until now, a welcome revisit to vintage Mothers masterpiece *We're Only It For The Money* for *Concentration Moon* and the hugely undervalued *Mom & Dad*, an utterly brilliant song, which thankfully escapes the wearing snarkiness that vocalists Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan seem irresistibly compelled to apply to their every Fillmore performance.

One gets the impression Zappa thought Volman and Kaylan hilarious and that they habitually and shamelessly played up to him. The painful dialogue sections of *What Kind Of Girl Do You Think We Are?*, *Bwana Dik*, *Do You Like My New Car?* and *The Mud Shark* are groupie-centred, tour-bus-as-locker-room in-jokes that should have remained between the boys in the band, rather than captured for posterity as uncomfortable reminders of a bygone age. Listening to this stuff now gives the impression that Zappa was either idiot or stoner, and as he was neither, it's even harder to excuse.

Elsewhere across these eight comprehensive CDs there's the Fillmore's legendary John and Yoko-favoured encore, an excellent, if relatively lo-fidelity warm-up set from Harrisburg, PA (including a priceless *Call Any Vegetable*) and the entire London Rainbow show that effectively cut short this particular Mothers era when Zappa was brutally assaulted by a 'fan' and suffered a career-halting broken neck.

Harsh criticism indeed.

IAN FORTNAM



CLASSIC ROCK

HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK'N'ROLL

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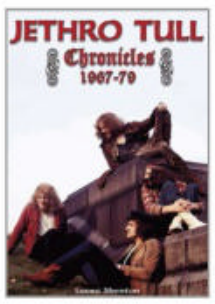
JETHRO TULL: CHRONICLES 1967-79

Laura Shenton WYMER PUBLISHING

Comprehensive overview of the band's defining era.



The story of Jethro Tull is hardly under-documented. But this sumptuous hardback covering their heyday takes an unorthodox approach, which, while absent of any new input from the key players, gives a sense of how they saw it, and how they were perceived, as it was all unfolding.

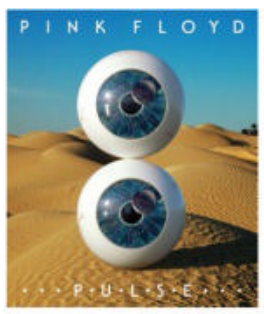
A cynic might call it a 'cut and paste' job, but so extensive is the use of the archive material that it makes for a compelling read. Laura Shenton's narrative style can be a touch on the dry side, but she leaves the storytelling to the extensive, sometimes page-long quotes from contemporary press coverage. Interviews and reviews from local papers, national weeklies and radio shows combine to present Tull's development in terms of how it was seen in real time, rather than through a modern-day lens or the sometimes unreliable memories of the protagonists looking back 40 or 50 years.

Plenty of elegantly presented photos and original press adverts illustrate it all, and while there's little original material here, the extensive quotes from the reliably loquacious Ian Anderson will always be highly readable. Is all that worth the £60 price tag? Debatable. But *Chronicles...* at least offers a new perspective on an oft-told tale. **JS**

PINK FLOYD

PULSE Restored & Re-Edited WARNER MUSIC

Repackaged double Blu-ray and DVD set – plus flashing red light.



The sheer spectacle of Pink Floyd's The Division Bell tour was captured on video by director David Mallet at London's Earl's Court on October 20, 1994, and released the following year as the concert film *PULSE* (a few months after the live album of the same name).

Restored and re-edited by Hipgnosis' Aubrey Powell for inclusion on 2019's *The Later Years* box set, that updated version is here reissued as a standalone DVD and Blu-ray, with the addition of the flashing red LED light that was a feature of the original *PULSE* album.

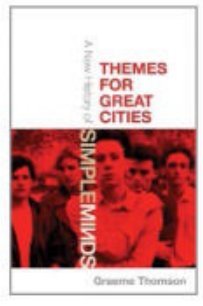
There's no quibbling with *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, the whole of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and even songs from A *Momentary Lapse Of Reason* and *The Division Bell* itself, though modern technology can't do a lot with the quality of the original video footage. The 'Documentaries And Additional Material Section' on the second disc will be of interest, not least because it's the only thing that wasn't in *The Later Years*.

But while the new packaging, red light and all, is snazzy compared to the 2006 double-DVD reissue, the booklet is disappointing – there are photos and credits but no liner notes. Given the premium price, it's hard not to have expected more. **MB**

THEMES FOR GREAT CITIES – A NEW HISTORY OF SIMPLE MINDS

Graeme Thomson CONSTABLE

A book of brilliant things.



As Graeme Thompson writes, "the music Simple Minds made between 1978 and 1985 was a chemical reaction between a unique group of people... during a frantic, frazzled and finite time period." Choosing to focus on this era rather than the group's entire career, means that the book retains a freshness; a band forever on the verge of worldwide recognition.

Leader Jim Kerr's first concert was Genesis at Glasgow Apollo in 1973 and, as Thompson notes, "a love for that kind of scale of drama never left him." Punk may have acted as a catalyst, but his old love of prog, Neu!, Bowie and Donna Summer's *I Feel Love* melded to create some stunningly unique music. By 1981, the group had signed to Virgin, were being produced by Steve Hillage and smuggled out a double album – albeit presented as two single albums packaged together. Opener, *In Trance As Mission*, paid homage to the *Apocalypse 9/8* section of *Supper's Ready*, something Thomson recognises and asks, "So what is this – post-prog post-punk krautrock?"

Themes For Great Cities is so taut and so full of cliff-hangers, that it reads more like a thriller. It's exactly the sort of book that Simple Minds deserve. **DE**

STEVEN WILSON

Limited Edition Of One CONSTABLE

A maverick autobiography from a maverick musician.

Seeing as he's a man who never seems that inclined to sell himself or foist his opinions on his public outside the framework of his songwriting, there's a danger that a Steven Wilson autobiography would be an understated, even guarded affair.

That couldn't be further from the truth. Not only is *Limited Edition Of One* a consistently fascinating overview of his life and career to date, but it's also tackled in the same way as he approaches his music: keen to avoid the predictable or generic without ego-tripping; always thoughtful without ever being dull; and ultimately keeping hold of the fact that he does what he does for enjoyment and self-expression as much as proving his genius to the world.

> **A fascinating overview that avoids the predictable.**

The structure of *Limited Edition Of One* is unorthodox, interspersing illuminating accounts of Wilson's formative years as a music fan and slow, often frustrating rise to professional prominence with seemingly trivial digressions in the form of extensive lists ("I bloody love 'em") of his favourite Netflix shows and vegan meals, which serve to paint a much broader picture of him as an individual than any traditional biography could hope to achieve.

His honesty is refreshing, from his admission that Porcupine Tree always had "in built obsolescence" due to the dreaded musical differences ("Richard didn't relate to metal, Gavin didn't really get electronic music, and Colin had always been somewhat ambivalent towards progressive rock") to his explanation that he's now reformed them after many years of refusing partly because "everyone finally believed it was the last thing I'd ever do". He also gets into his early morning squirrel-feeding habits and how he always cries at *Love Actually*, but that may be of marginally less interest.

Wilson's role as the go-to remixer of the prog classics and the hazards of that job are discussed in amusing detail, for example, on working with a reluctant Mr Fripp on remixing King Crimson's *Lizard*: "Here I was trying to persuade Robert that it's not a pile of shit". There are bittersweet experiences too, such as touring with Yes. "He looked down at my extended hand, and asked, 'Do you know where my dressing room is?'" writes Wilson of an encounter with Jon Anderson.

And he's keen to break the fourth wall by pointing out that he wrote this book with ghostwriter Mick Wall, to the point of including verbatim, long transcribed discussions of their Zoom calls, complete with details of dentist visits — Wall's, not Wilson's.

All told then, *Limited Edition Of One* is as unique as its title suggests, as befits a true original of progressive music.

JOHNNY SHARP

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MY PROG

PRESS/ANGELA MITTEN

CLIVE MITTEN

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

Where's home?
Walthamstow [in east London], with my studio, massive cats, parrot and my wife, Ang.

Earliest prog memory?
My older brother took me, aged 11, to see Bowie as Ziggy Stardust, then Yes on the Fragile tour. I thought the smart-arsed, classically proficient approach to music was made for me, and the clothes…

First prog album you bought?
Tubular Bells from the dope-filled Virgin Records in Brighton.

And the last?
Public Service Broadcasting's *Bright Magic*.

First prog gig?
Bowie, then Yes, and my third was Pink Floyd on the Dark Side Of The Moon tour. Cool, huh?

And the latest?
Kraftwerk at the Bluedot Festival [Jodrell Bank, Cheshire] in 2019.

The best prog gig you ever saw?
Pendulum at Glastonbury [in 2011]. They were followed on stage by an astonishing Beyoncé.

Newest prog discovery?
Tony Banks, by virtue of me orchestrating his keyboard parts for my current album. He's a musical genius.

Guilty musical pleasure?
I own 27 copies of the complete Beethoven symphonies. By different orchestras, in case you were wondering…

Specialist subject on *Mastermind*?
Ancient Near Eastern languages written using the cuneiform script, 3,200 to 100 BCE.

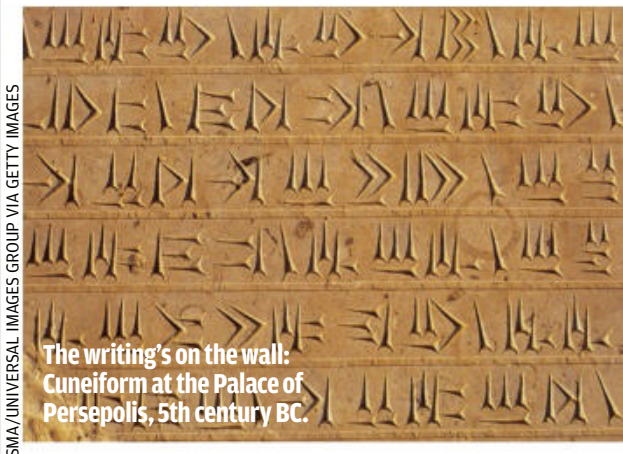
"Musical genius" Tony Banks.

KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE OWNS

Your favourite prog venue?
Hammersmith Odeon, closely followed by the old Marquee in Wardour Street, if it could be resurrected from wine bar and restaurant hell.

Your prog hero?
My grandmother, Buggo, who taught me how classical and prog music worked. Followed by Geddy [Lee], Tony [Banks], Chris [Squire] et al.

> Tony Banks is my newest prog discovery. He's a musical genius.



PRISMA/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The writing's on the wall: Cuneiform at the Palace of Persepolis, 5th century BC.

Outside of music, what are you into?
Cuneiform, cooking, our allotment, wine, and gin!

What do you collect?
Guitars. Currently I am stuck at 31 because guitars must always be prime — it's a big jump to 37.

Ever had a prog date?
I first met my wife Ang at a gig Twelfth Night played in 1981 at New Merlin's Cave at Kings Cross. I got lost going out to buy a kebab, and came back to find her buying [singer] Geoff Mann a pint at the bar.

The most important piece of prog music?
Supper's Ready. It has taught me much, through working on it myself. And it is loved by all.

Recommend us a good book.
Finnegans Wake by James Joyce. It's been a lifelong passion.

Prog muso you'd most like to work with?
Alive: Steven Wilson. Dead: Wagner.

PRISMA/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Proto-prog composer Richard Wagner!

And what are you up to at the moment?
My orchestral album [*Tales From A Misspent Youth — Volume One*] is out now on Bumnote Records, I'm writing a cookbook/memoir, and reading the complete works of Trotsky.

See www.bit.ly/mittensuite for more information.

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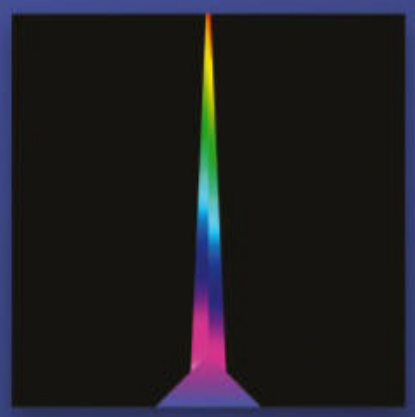


Mortality (Vinyl, CD & Digital)

The self-titled theme album debut from an all star jazz fusion lineup (feat. Verneri Pohjola, Aki Rissanen and others) has been hailed as a masterpiece of instrumental jazz-prog.

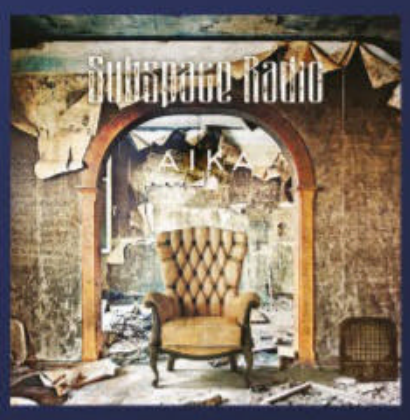
- Finnish Grammy nominee 2021 (best jazz album) -

"these eight tracks paint a vivid picture of what it means to be human" - Finnish Music Quarterly
"Mortality is about as good as music gets" - Exposé Magazine (USA)
"5/5 *****" -suomijazz.com, Colossus prog magazine, Nordiche Music (Germany) etc.

Elifantree - Hachi (2LP, 2CD, Digital)

"led by a flame-headed vocal Valkyrie, emboldened by the improvisational spirit of rock-jazz, Elifantree are an utter headspin of a band." - Clash Magazine

The new album 'Hachi', recorded in 8 different locations around the world is an amazing piece of art music.



Subspace Radio - Aika (CD & Digital)

Album Release: March 25th 2022

Completing the band's trilogy of theme albums Subspace Radio delivers hard hitting prog with a special contribution from world class vocalists like Kimmo Blom and Annica Milan.

First single - The Day of the Brightest Colours - OUT NOW!

Jacques Daniels Project - Distance (CD & Digital)

Drawing influences ranging from Tom Waits to Toto Jacques Daniels Project, based in the arctic city of Rovaniemi, is modern pop-prog at its finest with a northern, Aurora Borealis tinged flair. Complete with brilliant and lush vocal harmonies to match Crosby, Stills & Nash

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